

Algerian rebels kill nine — papers

PARIS (R) — Attackers killed three women and six children in an Algerian village, including a nine-month-old baby whose head was smashed against a rock, Algerian dailies said on Tuesday.

Thirty attackers descended on Cheraba hamlet, a community of some 200 farmers wedged between Chenoua Mountain and the Mediterranean, 60 km west of Algiers, on Sunday night, said Liberte and Le Matin newspapers.

The assailants tossed a bomb

into the first house, killing two children and their mother, and moved on to another house where they cut the throats of three children and one woman, the papers said.

As they left, they dragged away with them a woman and her nine-month-old baby but killed both of them just outside the village, the newspapers said.

Algerian security forces described the killers as Islamists and said they had killed five children and two

women in the village, but gave no further details.

Algeria's main Arabic-language Al Khabar daily said troops rushed to the scene and were still besieging the attackers, using heavy weapons to try to "annihilate" them.

More than 1,300 civilians have been killed in similar massacres in remote Algerian villages since late December. The government blames rebels.

In another incident, rebels killed a militiaman in his

home overnight Sunday-Monday in the western province of Tlemcen, said Liberte newspaper. Troops rushed to the scene and killed three rebels, it said.

In the neighbouring province of Sidi Bel Abbas, security forces at the weekend arrested six rebels hiding on the university campus of the provincial capital Sidi Bel Abbas, and recovered chemicals, weapons and ammunition. L'authentique newspaper said.

Turkish PM tells army to stick to military questions — source

ANKARA (AFP) — Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz called on Turkey's powerful military Tuesday to stick to its affairs and let his government deal with the battle against Islamism, a parliamentary source said.

"The battle against religious extremism is up to my government and not to the military, who already have a lot of work in Cyprus, in southeast Anatolia and in the Aegean," Mr. Yilmaz said during a closed meeting with leaders of his Motherland Party, the source said.

It is the second time this week that the premier has urged military chiefs away from the political issues pitting supporters of the country's secular status against those backing a return to Islamic law.

On Monday, the army strongly denied press reports implying that it could stage a coup to topple Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's government.

The newspapers have said the army, which played a vital role in forcing an Islamist-led government to resign last

year, is not happy with the performance of Mr. Yilmaz's coalition in fighting what it sees as Islamist extremism.

Turkey's pro-Islamic Welfare Party was banned earlier this year and its leader, former Premier Necmettin Erbakan, was barred from politics for five years.

Most of Welfare's members, minus Mr. Erbakan, have regrouped under a new banner — the Virtue Party — which has become Turkey's largest group in parliament, although it falls short of a majority.

Israeli report says Palestinian police paid protesters

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Israeli army has accused Palestinian police of actively promoting violence against Israeli soldiers in Hebron, paying youths up to \$15 a day to riot, the Haaretz newspaper reported Tuesday.

The newspaper said the report, mostly concerning two periods of violent protests in the divided West Bank city in the spring of 1997, was presented to the government in recent days.

The army claims that during the rioting between March and July 1997, "the Palestinian police organised riots in Hebron and systematically failed to restrain Palestinian rioters who were heading towards the Jewish quarter" in the city.

"In many cases the Palestinian Authority paid youths 30 to 50 shekels [\$8 to \$14] a day for participating in riots and attacking Israeli soldiers," it said.

The report said that in all there were 166 attacks on Israelis in Hebron in 1997 compared to 40 in 1996.

The report was drawn up before a new outbreak of violence in Hebron last week sparked by the killing of three Palestinian workers from the region by Israeli soldiers at an army checkpoint.



IRAQI INDUSTRY: A technician struggles with a control wheel Tuesday at Baji power station in northern Iraq. Everyday, technicians scavenge through a vast heap of rusting metal on the banks of the Tigris River beside Iraq's biggest power station. The technicians have to use manual controls to run the power station now — the lack of spares has put all the automated systems out of service (AFP photo)

Press group strongly condemns Israeli shooting of journalists in Hebron

AMMAN (J.T.) — The press rights group Committee to Protect Journalists has sent a "protest in the strongest terms" to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the wounding of journalists during the clashes in Hebron on Friday.

Following is the full text of the letter, which was made available to the Jordan Times on Tuesday:

"The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is writing to protest in the strongest terms the wounding of at least eight journalists by Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) gunfire on Friday in the town of Hebron.

On March 13, Israeli soldiers opened fire with rubber-coated metal bullets on a group of reporters covering clashes in Hebron between Palestinian protesters and Israeli troops. The names of the wounded reporters include: Nael Shiyoukhi and Mazen Dana of Reuters; Majdi Tamimi and Amer Jabari of ABC News; Hazem Bader and Imad Said of the Associated Press; and Wael

Shiyoukhi and Ayman Kurd of Amal TV.

CPJ is deeply disturbed by what witnesses to the incident have characterized as the IDF's intentional targeting of the journalists, who were in the vicinity of the clashes. Three of the wounded journalists told CPJ that they were at least 200 metres from Palestinian protesters when they were fired upon. These journalists also maintain that soldiers continued shooting at them despite their attempts to identify themselves as members of the press and entreaties to the soldiers to halt their fire.

According to Reuters: "Witnesses said the troops fired rubber bullets at the journalists from a distance of about 20 metres, even though they repeatedly identified themselves as journalists."

One of the injured journalists, Nael Shiyoukhi, was shot in the head, back, and leg by rubber bullets. "Video footage showed him lying on the ground with blood streaming from his forehead and drenching his shirt," Reuters reported.

"It showed him being shot two more times while he lay on the ground," Mazen Dana was then shot in the shoulder while going to the aid of Shiyoukhi. According to Dana, soldiers continued to fire at the reporters even as they attempted to carry Shiyoukhi into a nearby automobile.

On July 23, 1997, we wrote to Your Excellency [Mr. Netanyahu] protesting the July 13 shooting of four reporters — Imad Said (Associated Press), Mazen Dana (Reuters), Amer Jabari (ABC), and Diya Juabi (Abu Dhabi TV) — who were wounded while covering a group of Palestinian demonstrators burning an Israeli flag in Hebron.

Eyewitnesses to that incident said that the attack appeared to be intentional, given the considerable distance of at least three of the four journalists from the demonstrators and their conspicuous camera equipment, clearly identifying them as members of the media. In September 1996, journalists

provided similar testimony after several were wounded by rubber bullets fired by the IDF while covering Israeli-Palestinian violence in the West Bank. Those wounded in September 1996, charged the IDF with extreme negligence in failing to recognise members of the press who were far removed from the combatants and were clearly identifiable as cameramen.

As a nonpartisan organisation of journalists dedicated to the defense of our colleagues' rights throughout the world, CPJ fears that the journalists wounded in Hebron on Friday were targeted for having carried out their professional duties. We respectfully urge you to initiate an immediate and vigorous investigation into the incident and make its findings public. We also ask that you ensure that those implicated in any wrongdoing be swiftly brought to justice and that you take all appropriate measures to ensure the IDF's compliance with regulations safeguarding journalists in the field.

No dialogue until U.S. changes its policies toward Iran — Kharazi

DOHA (AFP) — Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi said Tuesday that his country would not enter into a dialogue with the United States until Washington changes its policies toward Tehran.

"America can engage in a dialogue with us when it changes its policies and attitude toward the Islamic Republic of Iran," Mr. Kharazi told the Qatari daily Al Watan.

He added that "there is no initiative from our side to establish a dialogue with Washington."

Mr. Kharazi is attending a meeting here of foreign ministers of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

"The Americans want dialogue, but we think America is

not serious in its requests for talks, and the experience of the Palestinians proves it," he said.

The U.S. State Department last week renewed a call for talks with Tehran, saying "there are major problems between our two countries, but these problems can be resolved by direct dialogue."

The United States and Iran broke off relations after U.S. embassy personnel were taken hostage in Tehran following the 1979 Islamic revolution.

In January, Mr. Kharazi called in Davos, Switzerland, for Washington to take actions to prove its desire to improve relations with Tehran.

Asked about the dispute between Iran and the United

Arab Emirates (UAE) over three islands in the Gulf, Mr. Kharazi said: "We repeat our sovereignty over these islands but at the same time we are ready to discuss various questions with friendly and neighbouring countries."

UAE Foreign Minister Rashed Al Nuaimi called Monday on Iran to negotiate to peacefully resolve the conflict over Abu Musa, and Greater and Lesser Tunb islands.

Iran took control of the Greater and Lesser Tunbs in 1971 following the departure of British troops from the Gulf. In 1992, Abu Dhabi accused Tehran of de facto annexing Abu Musa, which Iran jointly administered with the UAE emirate of Sharjah.

Saudi Arabia working to ensure a safe pilgrimage

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia has urged the cooperation of pilgrims and their countries to help ensure a safe pilgrimage at this year's Hajj — an annual ritual marked by tragedies.

Up to two million Muslims, half of them from abroad, perform the annual pilgrimage which is one of the pillars of Islam and a duty every able Muslim should perform once in a lifetime.

Saudi Pilgrimage and Endowments Minister Mahmoud

Ben Mohammat Safar said in an interview with the English-language Arab News on Tuesday that Saudi Arabia has approved a security plan for this year's Hajj, including a ban on the use of gas cylinders after a fire last year killed 343 people.

"We still need the cooperation of all pilgrims as well as all countries to ensure the successful implementation of these arrangements," he said.

He said the kingdom was providing some pilgrims with fire-

proof tents to prevent a recurrence of last year's blaze.

A quarter of the area at Mena, where the fire broke out last year, would have fireproof tents this year and more such tents were planned in future.

Over 70,000 tents were destroyed by the fire last April. Saudi authorities said it started when a pilgrim tried to cook a meal on a gas fire inside his tent.

"During this year's Hajj, a very sophisticated system using tents made of fibreglass and

other materials has been introduced after it was proven to be the most effective in resisting fires," Mr. Safar said.

"The system will be backed by strict safety and security measures including a ban on preparing food inside Mena except in designated central cooking sites under full safety requirements and a ban on the use of liquid petroleum gas, especially gas cylinders, inside pilgrims' camps," he added.

Bomb blast at Turkish high court, no injuries

ISTANBUL (R) — A bomb exploded at a Turkish high court where cases of political violence and dissent are dealt with but nobody was injured, Anadolu news agency said on Tuesday. It said the overnight blast caused minor damage to Istanbul State Security Court. No group claimed responsibility for the attack. Security courts, a remnant of the 1980-83 period of military rule, mostly hear trials of Kurdish separatists, Islamist activists and far-left urban guerrillas. Peaceful dissidents suspected of breaking Turkey's tough restrictions on freedom of expression are also tried in state

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran's Kharazi to brief U.N. on human rights

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi is due to address a United Nations conference in Geneva on Iran's views on human rights, the official Iranian News Agency (IRNA) reported on Tuesday. It said Mr. Kharazi left for Geneva on Tuesday on a one-day visit following this month's 33-nation Tehran forum on human rights in Asia, in

which he criticised the west for raising human rights concerns selectively and using them as political tools.

Seven Kurdish politicians face 22-year jail term

ANKARA (AFP) — Seven members of a pro-Kurdish party, including its leader, were indicted Tuesday on charges of being the political branch of an outlawed Turkish Kurdish rebel army, the Anatolian news agency said. These seven members of the People's Democracy Party face 22 years in prison if convicted in the State Security Court.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

16:10 Mr. Bogus Show
16:30 French Programmes
18:00 Oliver Twist
18:30 Drama — Neighbours
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Science Magazine — E-Mh
19:30 News headlines
19:35 Comedy — Campus Cop
20:00 Doc — The Nature of Healing
20:30 Ocean Warrior
21:10 Drama — Kung Fu
22:00 News in English
22:30 Illus Island
23:59 Country Music
00:30 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:22 Fajr
05:39 Sunrise/Duha
11:44 Dhuhr
15:09 Asr
17:49 Maghrib
19:06 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweith, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel.
4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622666
Anglican Church Tel.
4624833/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox

JORDAN TIMES

Tel. 773111-19

Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 568444
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541
Church of Presentation, Sweith Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771731

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Under the effect of the cold air mass affecting the region, it will be cold and rainy, skies cloudy to partly cloudy and winds westerly active. Snow is expected to fall over mountainous areas with altitudes of about 1,000-1,200 metres

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 773111-19

Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 568444
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541
Church of Presentation, Sweith Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771731

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Under the effect of the cold air mass affecting the region, it will be cold and rainy, skies cloudy to partly cloudy and winds westerly active. Snow is expected to fall over mountainous areas with altitudes of about 1,000-1,200 metres

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 773111-19

Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 568444
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541
Church of Presentation, Sweith Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771731

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Under the effect of the cold air mass affecting the region, it will be cold and rainy, skies cloudy to partly cloudy and winds westerly active. Snow is expected to fall over mountainous areas with altitudes of about 1,000-1,200 metres

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 773111-19

Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 568444
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541
Church of Presentation, Sweith Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771731

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Under the effect of the cold air mass affecting the region, it will be cold and rainy, skies cloudy to partly cloudy and winds westerly active. Snow is expected to fall over mountainous areas with altitudes of about 1,000-1,200 metres

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 773111-19

Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 568444
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541
Church of Presentation, Sweith Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771731

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Under the effect of the cold air mass affecting the region, it will be cold and rainy, skies cloudy to partly cloudy and winds westerly active. Snow is expected to fall over mountainous areas with altitudes of about 1,000-1,200 metres

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 773111-19

Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 568444
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541
Church of Presentation, Sweith Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771731

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Under the effect of the cold air mass affecting the region, it will be cold and rainy, skies cloudy to partly cloudy and winds westerly active. Snow is expected to fall over mountainous areas with altitudes of about 1,000-1,200 metres

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 773111-19

Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 568444
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541
Church of Presentation, Sweith Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771731

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Under the effect of the cold air mass affecting the region, it will be cold and rainy, skies cloudy to partly cloudy and winds westerly active. Snow is expected to fall over mountainous areas with altitudes of about 1,000-1,200 metres

Home News

FOR LEAVES...
Jordan. Qatar sig

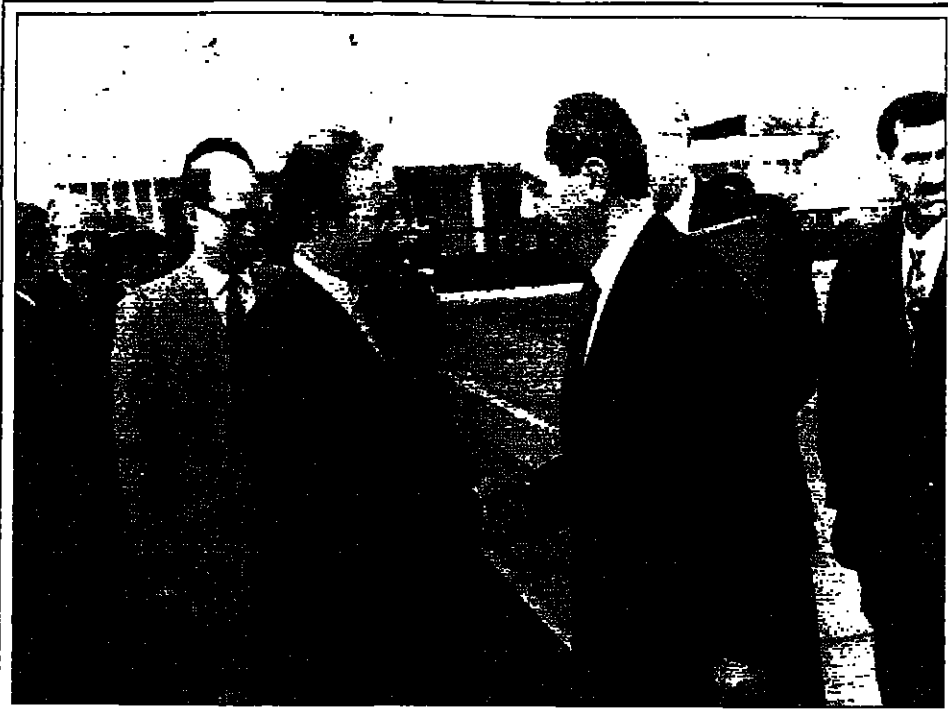
NEWS IN Am
BRIEF to h
mee

More possi

What's going

FILED

What's going



COOK LEAVES AMMAN: Acting Foreign Minister Talal Sata'an Hassan on Tuesday bids farewell to British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook upon his departure from Amman after a one-day visit. Mr. Cook held talks with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on the latest developments in the Middle East peace process and the efforts being made to put it on track again (Petra photo)

Ensur meets with chairman of Malaysian firm

AMMAN (Petra) — Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour Tuesday conferred with Rosely Ismail, chairman of the board of directors of the Niyaga Company, a major Malaysian firm in the water sector.

At the meeting, which was attended by Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin, the two sides reviewed the talks

which Mr. Ismail conducted with Ministry of Water and Irrigation officials on the Disi water project in southeast Jordan and Niyaga's investments in Jordanian water projects.

According to ministry sources, the Malaysian team is to conduct studies prior to submitting recommendations to the Malaysian government on

financing water projects. The two sides also reviewed the water situation and projects in Jordan in general.

Earlier Tuesday, Dr. Ensour chaired a regular session of the Council of Ministers. During the meeting, the Cabinet endorsed an agreement between Jordan and Cyprus on extraditing pris-

oners and consented to the allocation of JD500,000 from the treasury to finance Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities projects.

The Cabinet formed a delegation led by the secretary general of the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications to take part in a meeting by the Universal Postal Union's consultative council, due to convene in

Switzerland on April 20. The Cabinet also gave its consent to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to take part in an equestrian festival to be held in Zurich between March 26 and 29. The ministry will organise an exhibition on the sidelines of the festival to promote Jordan's tourism industry.

Private hospitals seek higher treatment charges

By Suha Ma'ayeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Private Hospitals Society (PHS) is seeking to raise prices at the Kingdom's 52 private hospitals because the current pricing system does not reflect actual treatment costs, according to a society official.

PHS chief Mahmoud Taher, a gynecologist, said the amount of treatment costs covered by private health insurance funds was last revised in 1991, though most prices are based on an agreement reached in 1982.

"The cost of treatment now is triple what it used to be," he told the Jordan Times.

He said PHS members will meet on Thursday to consider the new cost of treatment for all medical services offered.

He said the society would invite Ministry of Health and Medical Care officials and representatives of health insurance companies to help the society study new costs.

"We want to structure pricing to enable us to cover costs, even if the profit is only 10 per cent," Dr. Taher said.

"As private hospitals, we want to assure the health insurance funds that we will only count the real cost of treatment, plus a 10 per cent profit margin."

He added that lowering prices, in response to public demands, would not benefit patients.

According to the PHS pricing list, a third class accommodation at a private hospital, including the three meals, is set at JD8 per night, while a second class room is JD12 and a first class room is JD18. But few hospitals have respected the PHS pricing structure.

It costs JD27 to prepare a surgery theatre for a complicated heart or brain operation, he added.

"When our pricing list was shown to company representatives, they felt ashamed because the prices were so low," Dr. Taher stressed.

"This pricing system is not acceptable. We hope that the health insurance funds, the big companies and the banks will support the private sector and not try to outsmart us," he added.

Jordan's over 250,000 civil servants and security personnel are covered by a state-run health insurance scheme.

Amman mayor opens new market in Wihdat

By Ramadan Rawashdeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi on Tuesday inaugurated Al Wihdat Hangar Market as part of plans to improve services in the Greater Amman region and provide local shoppers with easier access to markets.

In an address at the inauguration ceremony, Dr. Abbadi said the project was carried out in implementation of directives by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, to the Amman Municipality to help develop the poorer districts of Jordan.

The hangar market replaces the old Wihdat

market, which Dr. Abbadi said lacked proper organization and essential services and where vendors tended to disrupt traffic with their cars.

According to the mayor, the market will create jobs for 600 Jordanians and will operate for 16 hours a day. The 4,500 square metre hangar market, which was set up on 15 dunums of land, contains 263 vendor stalls and is supplied with electricity, a water and sewage system, adjoining parking lot, and other utilities.

Dr. Abbadi said the project cost a total of JD1.3 million, of which JD1 million was spent on the land and infrastructure services, while the balance covered the actual

construction costs. The mayor stated that the municipality plans to construct a similar market in the Jabal Hussein district, providing jobs to another 600 Jordanians.

In a statement to Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times, Dr. Abbadi said these projects have been designed to provide employment to Jordanian citizens only, and the municipality will not allow stall owners to employ non-Jordanians.

However, Omar Mustafa Younis, a stall owner, complained that his 3 by 2.5-metre stall was not large enough to accommodate his merchandise.

Mr. Younis added that municipality officials were

preventing vendors from placing agricultural products on the ground.

Another stall owner, Jawaher Hashem, said the municipality favoured some people by assigning them stalls near the entrance, while he and others were given places at the back.

A municipality official, Omar Abdul Rahim, defended the municipality's arrangements, saying that vendors should keep their merchandise in the stalls assigned to them to maintain easy access to all parts of the hangar.

He said the municipality will soon build a mosque on an adjacent plot of land, both of which will be financed by a benefactor.

Red Crescent, Spain sign agreement to implement community health programme

AMMAN (J.T.) — Spanish Ambassador Eduardo Mirapeix and Jordanian National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) President Mohammad Haddad Tuesday signed a cooperation agreement and protocol for the implementation of the "Programme on Health and Community Development in Ma'an Governorate," with assistance by the Spanish Red Cross, for the whole value of \$310,000, according to a JNRCS press release.

The duration for the implementation of the project is 18 months. Among the objectives of the programme are to improve the living conditions and health care for the underprivileged population in Jordan, specifically in the fields of maternal-infancy care and preventive health measures, the statement continued.

The programme will be carried out by both societies through the Ma'an branch of the JNRCS and will address the needs of several villages. The present programme will address health issues, hygiene questions, environmental care, first aid and

family planning. The implementation of the project will be done through the training of health guides from each of the villages who will be dedicated to carrying out teaching workshops at the villages for the community as a whole, the announcement said.

The Ma'an branch will be supplied with laboratory and X-ray equipment to become capable of attending some of the medical needs of the local community. An in-kind remittance of vitamins and essential medicines will be sent shortly by the Span-

ish Red Cross. The JNRCS will contribute to the said project in a number of sectors, such as the supply of the land and the building that will be dedicated for the branch, as well as the supply of transportation vehicles for the health guides and an ambulance.

Among the projects that were carried out previously by both institutions are the "First Aid Educational Equipment," "Support to the Salt Orphanage," and "Aquatic Saving Equipment" valued at \$46,420, the statement concluded.

Jordan, Qatar sign awqaf agreement

DOHA (Petra) — Jordan and Qatar signed a memorandum of understanding Tuesday on cooperation in the field of awqaf and Islamic affairs.

Under the agreement, which was signed by Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi and his Qatari counterpart Ahmad Abdullah Al Murri, the ministries of the two countries will exchange information, research and

seminar papers relating to Islamic heritage and culture, and expertise on improving methods of utilising and investing zakat funds.

The memorandum provides for reciprocal visits to gain first-hand experience in such areas as Islamic preaching, guidance and counselling.

The two sides will work together to counter subversive elements and anti-Islam trends, and to promote mod-

eration. Under the three-year agreement, both ministries will implement joint waqf investment projects and will build mosques and Islamic cultural centres and establish Islamic libraries in the two countries.

The two sides also agreed to form a joint committee, headed by the respective awqaf ministers, to implement the provisions of the agreement.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Regent attends armoured brigade ceremony

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Tuesday attended a special ceremony held by Prince Hassan Bin Talal's 60th Armoured Brigade to mark his 51st birthday, which falls on March 20. The Crown Prince was accompanied by Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Brigadier General Tahseen Shurdom. On Thursday, HRH Princess Rahma will open a conference for youth to mark Prince Hassan's birthday.

Clothing factory fire leaves one injured

AMMAN (Petra) — Civil Defence Department fire-fighting teams Tuesday extinguished a fire which broke out in a clothing factory in the Abu Alanda area. One worker was hospitalised for smoke inhalation and was listed in moderate condition.

2 killed, 40 injured in bus accident

AMMAN (Petra) — Two people were killed and 40 were injured when a bus overturned near Eastern Ureinba village along the Desert Highway. Traffic department sources attributed the accident to high speed and slippery roads.

Amman university to host AAU board meeting next year

AMMAN (J.T.) — Amman Private University is scheduled to host the 32nd meeting of the Association of Arab Universities (AAU) next year, according to university President Amin Mahmoud.

Speaking upon his return from the 31st AAU board meeting in Egypt, Dr. Mahmoud said the university had asked to host the 1999 event during the Egypt meeting, which was attended by heads of Arab universities.

"Amman Private University is hoping to project Amman as a major higher education centre in the Arab World," Dr. Mahmoud said. "Jordan is a pioneer in creating the opportune atmosphere for higher education through

private universities and community colleges, setting a remarkable example for other Arab states in this field."

According to Dr. Mahmoud, "The Future University" will be one of the main themes in a series of seminars to be sponsored by Amman Private University on the sidelines of next year's meeting.

A large number of educators and presidents of Arab universities are expected to take part in this seminar.

The recent three-day board meeting, which was held at Suez University under the patronage of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, was attended by the presidents of all private and state universities in Jordan, he added.

More rain forecast, snow possible at high elevations

AMMAN (J.T.) — The weather forecast calls for rain through Thursday with possible snowfall in regions of high elevation, such as the Sharrah Heights in the south and Ajloun in the north, according to the Department of Meteorology on Tuesday.

A low pressure cell that moved in from the Mediterranean toward northern Syria will continue to affect the Kingdom over the next two days.

accompanying a series of cold fronts that will result in thunderstorms and rain in various parts of the country, according to a department official.

Temperatures will reach a high of 11° C on Wednesday, dropping to 6° C at night. On Thursday, the high will be 9° C, with a low of 4° C.

Temperatures are expected to begin rising on Friday, the department official added.

Tourist guides plan Jordan promotion campaign during upcoming Italian trek

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Four Jordanian tourist guides have announced plans to criss-cross Italy on foot for a month to try and lure Italian visitors to the Kingdom.

"We simply want to tell them about Jordan's many tourist sites and archaeological treasures that are not known to them," Jamil Bawalsah, one of the four men, told the Jordan Times.

He said the group, all fluent in Italian, will be leaving for Italy on June 1.

"This idea crossed" my mind after seeing the number of Italian tourists visiting Jordan decline to an unbearable level," Mr. Bawalsah added. "We had to take action to help redress the situation."

will take them to Rome, Perugia, Arezzo, Florence, Prato, Bologna, Modena, Padova, Venice, Trieste, Udine, Bolzano, Trento, Brescia, Bergamo, Monza and Milan.

The guides said they believe that many residents in these cities could afford to travel abroad because their income was relatively high.

"We will walk through the most crowded streets of Italy to meet as many people as possible and tell them about Jordan," Mr. Bawalsah said.

"We also aim at foreign tourists who are visiting Italy at this time of year," added his colleague, Mahdi Yanis.

"People who visit Jordan mainly come to see major attraction sites such as Petra and Jerash," Mr. Bawalsah said. "But there

is much more to see and that is what we are trying to do... we want to open more of Jordan to the Italian people."

He said several Jordanians were sponsoring their trip according to their own means.

Souvenir shop owner Hani Khudairi, who also owns a factory that produces beauty products made from Dead Sea minerals, said he will provide them with goods to back their drive.

"I believe it is a good idea to promote Jordan internationally, and maybe these young guides can make a difference," he told the Jordan Times.

"I am determined to help them by giving them free Dead Sea products as a gift the Italians they will come across," he added.

"It is a small step towards

promoting Jordan worldwide, but I hope that many will follow suit."

The group will be carrying Jordanian and Italian flags and will wear T-shirts bearing the pictures of different Jordanian sites.

"We will also carry slides and documentary films to supplement our lectures," Mr. Bawalsah said.

The team said they are targeting Italy because they have been guiding Italian tourists in Jordan for years and know much about their country.

"We know Italy like we know the back of our hands. The language is also no problem for us," Mr. Bawalsah said.

"We hope more guides will follow in our footsteps and go to other countries, because direct contact between people is the best way," he added.

what's going on

FILMS

* "The Heifer" at Inspira-Corvantes, Jabal Amman, on Thursday, March 19 at 5:00 p.m.

* "Italian Architecture: in Rome and Venice since AD 1600 — Age of the Baroque, and a Visit to the Classical Art Museum of Florence" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, on Thursday, March 19 at 5:30 p.m. (presented and commented on in Arabic by Dr. Mazen Asfour)

* "Dances With Wolves" at the American Center, Amman, on Thursday, March 19 at 5:00 p.m.

* German film "Der Paganer" (with subtitles in English) at the American Center, Amman, on Thursday, March 19 at 7:00 p.m.

* Children's film "A Village With Three Corners" at the British Council, Jabal Amman

CONCERT

* "Impressions From the East" by Agnes Bostan with the orchestra of the National Music Conservatory and the choir of the Al-Hilwah School for Girls at the University of Jordan, Al-Hassan Ibn Talal auditorium, at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITION

* Works by Iraqi artist Saadoun Ahmad at "Hamam" Art Gallery, Garden, Suez, (JD 500,000), until March 20

* Paintings by Salah al-Din Smad at Basmala Art Gallery, Suez, (JD 200,000), until March 20

* Works by Sami al-Sayid at Suez Art Gallery, Suez, (JD 500,000), until March 20

* Paintings by Sami al-Sayid at Suez Art Gallery, Suez, (JD 500,000), until March 20

Obscure disease focus of collaboration between Jordanian, British, Japanese doctors

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A group of Jordanian doctors is working with British and Japanese colleagues to try and determine whether the still incurable Behcet Disease, which attacks joints and eyes, could have hereditary links. Medical details on the illness, first recorded in Turkey in 1937 by a Turkish doctor named Behcet, remain scant.

The Jordan Behcet Disease study group, comprising ophthalmologist Faisal Fayad, heart specialist Hani Zureikat, and rheumatologist Wafa' Madeinat, are trying to trace genetic patterns of the illness in the Kingdom.

They are cooperating with the University of Yokohama in Japan and London's St. Thomas Hospital in the project, launched in 1997.

There are no official figures on how many Jordanians are suffering from the disease. But Dr. Madeinat said

that in the past few years, she had come across 150 cases of Behcet Disease, an illness that commonly hits males between the ages of 20 to 30 and can lead to blindness.

"We are trying to trace the genetic patterns of this disease in Jordan in collaboration with this team from England," Dr. Madeinat told the Jordan Times in a recent interview.

"We are also in the process of laying the foundation for a support system for the families of patients," she added.

Support also came from Georgina Seaman, head of the Behcet Disease Society in England, who visited Jordan last week and shared the experience of her 900-strong group with victims of the disease and their families.

She became involved in the process after her husband developed symptoms in 1982.

"We are trying to find out about the pattern of the disease within families," Mrs. Seaman explained.

"We estimate that there are about 2,000 people with Behcet Disease in England."

Doctors said the disease's symptoms are caused by unpredictable outbreaks of inflammation in small blood vessels taking the form of oral and genital ulcers, arthritis-like pain in the joints, and inflammation inside the eyes.

The disease can also affect bowel movement and the nervous system. Behcet patients tend to develop thrombosis, while severe cases could lead to problems in the larger blood vessels near the heart, doctors said.

Some doctors have expressed doubts on whether the disease was hereditary.

But British ophthalmologist David Verity, who has been researching Behcet Disease in the Middle East, believes "there is a genetic background to it, and we are trying to find which gene causes this disease."

The Jordan group is taking blood samples from patients in Jordan.

"Then, samples are flown to London to find which genes correlate with problems the patients have," added Dr. Verity, from London's St. Thomas Hospital.

The Behcet study group is also collaborating with the Japanese, who have conducted extensive research on the issue.

"We send half of the samples from the patients in Jordan to the professors in Japan hoping that research will progress faster," Dr. Verity said.

The family of Jordanian Khalil Abdul Jalil, now 26, said he was 15 years old when he began to develop severe mouth ulcers and to constantly complain of losing sensation in his cold and swollen hands.

The symptoms were similar to those experienced by his uncle and his grandfather.

At 24, Khalil was diagnosed as having Behcet Disease and for the past two years, he has been undergoing therapy in Jordan.

have numerous ulcers in his mouth and complained of pain in his joints, we attributed it to old age," said Khalil's mother.

"But when Mahmoud, my brother-in-law, also started to have the same symptoms, we wondered."

But she said none of her other eleven children have had any Behcet Disease symptoms.

Mrs. Seaman said her husband has been a fortunate Behcet Disease patient because it has not hit him very seriously.

"He has had occasional mouth and anal ulcers as well as skin lesions," she said. "But his joints hurt all the time and he has lost some vision in one of his eyes."

Most treatment for the disease seeks to suppress the immune system, which becomes over-active. "If the immune system is calmed down, then inflammation does not break out so frequently. This makes symptoms less aggressive and some may disappear," Mrs. Seaman said.

North Korea snubs South's call for talks

GENEVA (AFP) — South Korea's hopes for dialogue with Communist North Korea were dashed Tuesday after Pyongyang refused to respond to its proposal for bilateral talks before resuming a second round of four-party peace meetings.

"We proposed bilateral talks yesterday, and had expected to meet them this morning. But there has been no response from them and so we have no plans to meet them now," a South Korean source told AFP.

He had earlier said South Korea was hoping to discuss "issues related to the four-party talks and not bilateral issues."

A North Korean delegate to the peace talks here, Li Gun, told reporters Tuesday: "This is a place for four-party talks and not South-North dialogue."

China, chairing this second round of talks to bring peace on the Korean Peninsula, was to hold bilateral meetings with the United States and South Korea ahead of the resumption of four-party talks.

China is to meet with South Korea at midday after meeting with the North. The full-fledged peace talks will begin in the afternoon at 3:00 p.m. (1400 GMT).

The four-party peace talks aim to thrash out a permanent peace treaty to replace the current armistice that technically ended the three-year Korean war in 1953.

North Korea's chief delegate, Kim Kye-Gwan, con-

firmed as he emerged from the meeting with China that the four parties would meet in the afternoon.

Asked whether the talks would continue Wednesday, he said: "We don't know about tomorrow."

A South Korean government official, asked how he thought the talks would turn out, said: "We are hoping, but we don't expect any progress at the moment."

Talks with the North Koreans have so far been disappointing and really a setback from the last round of talks, he said. "At least in the first round, we smiled and cracked jokes."

U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said in Washington that expectations were "not high for breakthroughs in what will be a slow and painstaking effort."

"We are in for a long, long haul," he said, adding that whatever the outcome of the talks, Washington does not envisage imminent withdrawal of 37,000 U.S. troops currently stationed in South Korea.

The North Koreans, who said they embarked on a military exercise last week in response to growing threats from Washington, Seoul and Tokyo, have consistently demanded a U.S. troop withdrawal from the South.

The second round of four-party peace talks opened Monday after more than five hours' delay, caused by a row between the two

Koreas over the seating plan.

The South Koreans wanted to face the North Koreans at all meetings, but the Pyongyang delegation insisted on alternating opposite the U.S. representatives and those from Seoul.

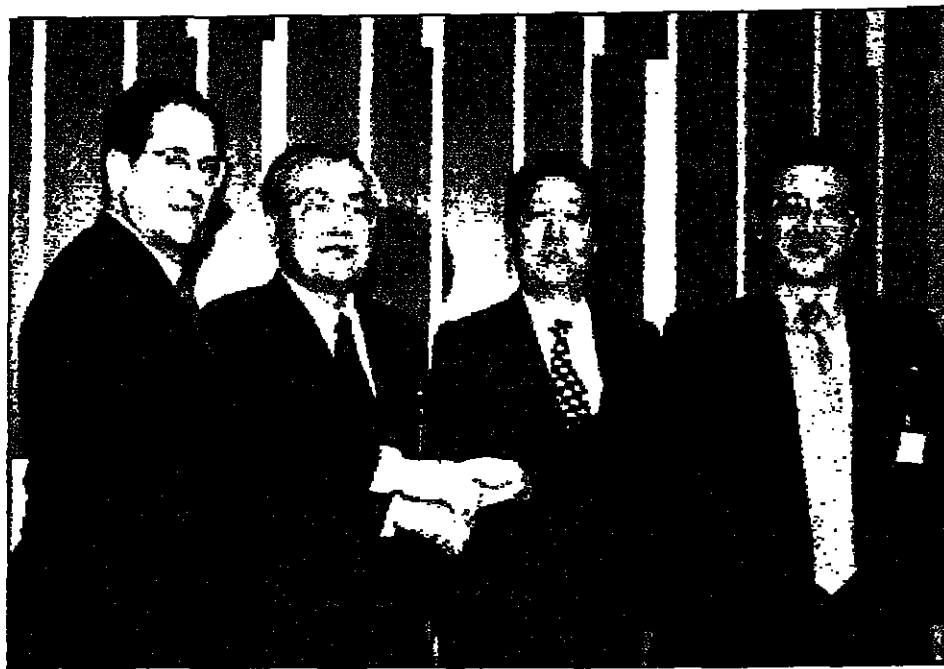
It is unclear when the talks will end, although the Chinese said Monday that the meeting would go on for "at least three days."

This is the second round of full-fledged peace talks following a landmark meeting in December, but the first under newly installed South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung, who has called for an exchange of special envoys and a possible summit with North Korea.

North Korea has yet to reply, and the South had hoped for some informal contacts to bring up the issue at these talks.

"But the atmosphere is not right. One thing good and different is that North Korea has not publicly denounced President Kim, like it had done so many times before," the Seoul official said.

South Korea's head delegate, Song Young-Shik, proposed Monday setting up a joint committee with North Korea to implement a 1991 South-North Korean accord aimed at promoting reconciliation, exchanges, cooperation and non-aggression.



U.S. Secretary of Foreign Affairs Stanley Roth, Deputy Foreign Minister of South Korea Young Shik Song, Deputy Foreign Minister of China Chen Jian and Foreign Minister of North Korea Kim Kye Gwan (from left to right) hold hands as they pose for photographers prior to the opening session of a second round of talks aimed at forging a peace settlement between the two Koreas in Geneva (Reuters photo)

Deposed Cambodian co-premier accused of insurrection

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — A Cambodian court heard allegations Tuesday that aides loyal to co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh armed Khmer Rouge guerrillas and prepared them for an attack on the capital.

Prince Ranariddh went on trial for the second time in as many weeks Tuesday. As with his first trial, the prince was absent, having dismissed the legality of the Phnom Penh military court.

Prosecutor Sao Sok accused the exiled prince and three top aides of negotiating with banned Khmer Rouge rebels, bringing illegal soldiers into the capital and arming them.

Sao Sok said the prince's aim was to "overthrow the legal government by force" and said he would prove his accusations with the testimony of more than 20 witnesses and evidence.

But after only 15 witnesses, Presiding Judge Ney Thol told the prosecutor that he had heard enough and adjourned the trial until 8:30 a.m. Wednesday (0130 GMT) when he said he would announce his verdict.

"There have been enough witnesses to end the testimony," he said, ordering the courtroom — a packed defence ministry auditorium — cleared after five-and-a-half hours of testimony.

Five charges have been made against Prince Ranariddh, his top military commander Nhek Bun Chhay and two other gen-

erals, Seray Kosal and Chao Sambath.

Chao Sambath was killed execution-style after the prince's ouster by Cambodia's strongman Hun Sen last July. One charge comes under a 1981 law that provides for the death penalty despite a ban on capital punishment in Cambodia's 1993 constitution.

Other counts include two from 1994 legislation banning the Khmer Rouge and one from a 1992 law relating to organised crime and conspiracy.

The four could be sentenced to life in prison if convicted. The 15 witnesses who testified Tuesday, including one self-described former Khmer Rouge guerrilla Em Rotha, told the court that Nhek Bun Chhay had equipped the guerrillas and given them orders to fight Hun Sen's troops.

"I attended a lot of meetings in which we were told we would fight against the second prime minister," Em Rotha said. "When I refused my life was threatened."

Other witnesses, including several former royalist commanders and Prince Ranariddh's former military adviser, said they had known of or received orders from Nhek Bun Chhay to move their troops towards the capital to fight.

Pictures of huge quantities of confiscated guns, ammunition, radios, a tank and an armoured personnel carrier were on display in

the courtroom.

None of the defendants were present and Amnesty International condemned the trial as unfair just before it opened. Amnesty noted how Chao Sambath, deputy chief of the prince's military intelligence unit, was killed following the prince's violent ouster.

"It is farcical that the Cambodian authorities have brought a court case against a dead man but not against those who killed him," the rights group said in a statement.

In a separate statement from Bangkok, Chao Sambath's widow, who recently filed a lawsuit against Hun Sen claiming he was responsible for her husband's death, Tuesday also attacked the court's decision.

She appealed to King Norodom Sihamoni "to put an end to this disgraceful farce and request an independent investigation of my husband's murder in order that those responsible for it are punished."

On March 4, Prince Ranariddh was found guilty of smuggling weapons and sentenced to five years in prison. Nhek Bun Chhay, was given a four year prison term and bodyguard Thach Soueng a two-year suspended sentence.

Prince Ranariddh has insisted his negotiations with the guerrillas were to end Cambodia's civil war, but few observers expect anything other than convictions.

Russia to expel two Norwegian envoys

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia will expel two Norwegian diplomats as a reprisal for Oslo's move to kick out two Russian envoys and declare three others persona non grata.

Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik postponed a visit to Russia planned for this week after the expulsions were announced.

Last Thursday Oslo accused Mr. Kotscharev and Mr. Serebriakov of spying, and ordered them to "leave the country as quickly as possible."

Three other diplomats formerly in post in Norway were declared "persona non grata." They were former advisor Alexander Monakhov, former attaché Igor Tschaly and former Vice-Consul Anatoly Zhigalov.

Norway said the five Russians had been attempting "for several years" to recruit Norwegians to work for

Russian intelligence services.

Justice Minister Aud-Inger Auer, citing a report by Norway's territorial defence service, POT, said those they had tried to recruit were "political figures," but did not elaborate.

Since the end of World War II 45 Soviets or Russians have been expelled from Norway. Six Soviets were thrown out in 1977, and other five diplomats were asked to leave the country six years later while four others were declared persona non grata.

The same year, the Soviet Union's military attaché in Norway was expelled for trying to recruit a high-ranking Norwegian official, while a decade later four KGB officers were expelled on charges of industrial espionage.

China welcomes Clinton but says no dissident deal

BEIJING (R) — China Tuesday welcomed a plan by U.S. President Bill Clinton to visit in late June but dismissed widespread speculation that jailed Chinese dissidents would be released around that time.

"President Clinton has decided to visit China in late June. The Chinese side welcomes this," foreign ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao told reporters.

"We believe President Clinton's state visit will usher in a new era in Sino-U.S. relations," Mr. Zhu said.

Mr. Clinton said last Thursday he was moving his planned trip to China to late June instead of November to build on the momentum of improving Sino-U.S. ties.

Speculation is rife that China may release political prisoners before or after Mr. Clinton's visit.

But Mr. Zhu dismissed the speculation, saying: "I believe that on this issue there is no deal."

"China has rules and regulations on granting criminals medical parole. So long as it conforms with the rules and regulations, we will handle it in accordance with the law."

"We did this in the past. We will do it too in the future," Mr. Zhu said without elaborating.

China released its best-known dissident, Wei Jingsheng, on medical parole last November, weeks after President Jiang Zemin's state visit to the United States.

Asked if the two countries would sign any communiqués, Mr. Zhu said: "Currently the Chinese and U.S. sides are actively making preparations for this."

Mr. Zhu hailed a U.S. decision not to criticize China's human rights record at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva this month as "wise."

The United States decided against censuring China, citing progress on human rights by Chinese authorities.

Mr. Clinton would be in China at a sensitive time, weeks after the ninth anniversary of the army's June 4, 1989 bloody crackdown on student-led demonstrations for democracy in Beijing.

But it would get Mr. Clinton out of the country, showing him representing the United States at an important summit, about the same time as the Arkansas trial of the Paula Jones sexual harassment lawsuit against him. The trial starts on May 27 and could last weeks.

The White House has said any fallout from the Jones trial had nothing to do with Mr. Clinton wanting to go to China during an already busy travel period. He will go to Africa in March, to South America in April and to Europe in May.

Last October's summit between Mr. Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin, the first Sino-U.S. summit since the 1989 crackdown, produced a breakthrough agreement that China would stop exporting nuclear and missile technology to Iran.

The two countries also agreed to work towards a "constructive strategic partnership" and Washington reassured Beijing it would not back a bid by rival Taiwan to rejoin the United Nations or declare independence.

Beijing has regarded Taiwan as a rebel province since the Communists won the Chinese civil war and sent the defeated nationalists fleeing into exile in 1949.

Dissident urges China's new premier to pursue political reforms

BEIJING (AFP) — A Chinese dissident wasted no time Tuesday in urging newly elected Premier Zhu Rongji to undertake political reforms, a Hong Kong-based dissident organisation reported.

In an open letter — a copy of which was forwarded to AFP by the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China — Guiyang-based activist Zeng Ning congratulated Mr. Zhu on his election and on his string of successes in directing China's economic policy.

But he said: "I hope after market reforms to the fundamental economic structure are in place, you will be able to take reform of the political structure in hand."

Mr. Zeng also expressed hope that the new premier

would not suffer the fate of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang — reformist leaders of the 1980s who were both purged by more powerful conservative hardliners in the Communist Party when their challenges to the existing order went too far.

Hu died in April 1989, two years after his ouster, and Mr. Zhao remains under virtual house arrest. The latter was disgraced for having sympathised with pro-democracy demonstrators who occupied Tiananmen Square ahead of the army's brutal crackdown on June 4, 1989.

The dissident, who is employed as a construction worker, spent a total of seven years in jail for two separate "counter-revolutionary" crimes since 1981, the centre said.

Runoff probable in marred Armenian election

YEREVAN (R) — Armenia's acting president and his top challenger appeared headed Tuesday for a second-round runoff after elections marked by accusations of fraud.

The central elections commission said with about a fifth of Monday's vote counted Prime Minister Robert Kocharyan, head of state since Levon Ter-Petrosyan resigned last month in a row over the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, had 38.9 per cent.

Mr. Kocharyan's main rival, Armenia's Soviet-era Communist leader Karen Demirchyan, was put at 27.0 per cent. If the trend is confirmed, a runoff will be held on March 30.

But even before these unofficial returns were given, the poll was thrown into a controversy that seemed certain to thrust the mountainous republic into another political crisis and unnerved neighbours in the oil-rich Caspian Sea region.

Six of the 12 candidates, including Mr. Demirchyan, signed a statement saying the vote was hopelessly marred by fraud and leaving little doubt they blamed Mr. Kocharyan supporters.

"The entire election process has shown that there are large amounts of violation, falsification, and terror," the statement said.

"We declare that the extraordinary election in Armenia, regardless of the results, cannot be considered free and fair."

Mr. Kocharyan's camp dismissed the statement, saying even if there had been some irregularities, they were not enough to have a big impact.

"The statement by the six candidates is an expression of their panic. It is an attempt to cast a shadow over the election," said Aghvan Vartanyan, a top Mr. Kocharyan aide.

Foreign observers and neighbouring countries are scrutinising the election because of sensitivities over the nearby Caspian oil wealth as well as concerns for Armenian democracy.

Diplomats say Armenia — which is landlocked and without oil of its own — desperately needs a clean vote to rebuild its image abroad, tarnished by fraudulent polls in 1995 and 1996.

According to the election commission, the unofficial turnout Monday was about 60 per cent of the 2.2 million-strong electorate in Armenia, a poor but strategically located country bordering Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Georgia.

Votes from the capital Yerevan, home to 40 per cent of the electorate, have yet to be counted. Under election rules, if no one

candidate secures 50 per cent of the overall vote a runoff is held two weeks after the first round.

The commission said Sergei Badalyan, leader of the Orthodox Communist Party, was third on 18.0 per cent of the votes counted so far and ex-Prime Minister Vazgen Manukyan fourth on 9.7.

Mr. Kocharyan, Mr. Demirchyan and Mr. Manukyan are generally regarded as the only candidates with realistic hopes of winning the election to replace Mr. Ter-Petrosyan, forced out last month by a nationalist outcry lead by the prime minister — a former Karabakh leader.

Mr. Ter-Petrosyan quit over his proposed concessions to Azerbaijan in the decade-long conflict between the two neighbours over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

International observers reported some irregularities and voter intimidation in Monday's voting, and said most of it seemed to have been committed by Mr. Kocharyan supporters.

But they said it was too early to make a definitive judgement on the election and that counting, which they said was the focus of cheating in the 1996 vote that reelected Mr. Ter-Petrosyan, would be crucial.



Armenian official holds a ballot during the counting at a polling station. The Central Election Commission said about 60 per cent of the eligible 2.2 million voters had cast ballots by the end of voting (Reuters photo)

Indian Sikhs banned from holding weddings in hotel, private halls

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's Sikhs were forbidden Tuesday from getting married in hotels and private halls after their highest religious body said it was blasphemous.

The Akal Takht, Sikhdom's highest religious body, said Sikhs could only marry in temples or at home. It also warned violators with punishment — a power the Akal Takht traditionally wields.

Five senior clerics from the Golden Temple, Sikhdom's holiest shrine in the northern city of Amritsar, announced

the ban saying nuptials at hotels and private halls dishonoured the religious book of the Sikhs.

The book, the Guru Granth Sahib, is worshipped as a living god. Marriages are solemnised in front of the text and people are not supposed to smoke or drink alcohol in any room where it is kept.

Khushwant Singh, one of India's best-known Sikhs, told AFP the ban would be respected but added that most people failed to find any logic in the move.

"Smoking and drinking are not even proscribed in our holy text. The ban on smoking and drinking came later but it is now followed by Sikhs everywhere."

Singh, a veteran journalist and author, said the move was motivated.

"I think the revenues of the gurdwaras (Sikh temples) are falling because nowadays many people get married in hotels. The hotels were posing a challenge to their income."

The ageing Singh, who loves his "daily tippie" said he was

"secretly amused by the move. We are notorious for our drinking, like the Scots and Irish and the Poles. And here we have this because it is supposed to offend Sikh sensibilities."

Sikh businessman Gurbachan Singh said the directive was "medieval."

"Why should the Sikh community go back when the whole of India is getting married in hotels?"

"What will thousands of Sikhs in Europe and America do where there are few gurd-

waras? The whole world is smoking and drinking... even Muslims. Sikhs should never accept this."

A spokesman for Le Meridien, a luxury hotel in New Delhi owned by a Sikh family, said they had decided not to accept reservations for Sikh weddings.

Sikhs in India number about 17 million and are one of the country's main religious minorities. Several thousand Sikhs work overseas, mainly in Britain, Canada and the United States.

World N

Ally of Kohl c

Most populous

Slovakia, Clement, 24

Slovakia, Clement, 24

Slovakia, Clement, 24

Hong Kong

to help fight

Hong Kong

Hong Kong

Hong Kong

Hong Kong

Hong Kong

Hong Kong

NS denies v

dead girl's

NS denies v

NS denies v

NS denies v

NS denies v

NS denies v

NS denies v

NS denies v

Ally of Kohl challenger to head most populous regional state

BONN (AFP) — A close ally to Germany's would-be chancellor Gerhard Schröder will take over in June as head of the country's most populous and industrialised regional state, North Rhine-Westphalia.

Wolfgang Clement, 54, the state's economy minister, will succeed Johannes Rau, 67, also a leading SPD figure, who announced late Monday that he would cut short his mandate that ran until 2000.

Mr. Rau announced his decision following an emergency meeting of regional SPD leaders. He also recommended that fed-

eral SPD Secretary General Franz Müntefering, 58, succeed him as head of the party's North Rhine-Westphalia branch.

Mr. Müntefering is also the SPD's campaign manager for the Sept. 27 general elections.

Although the succession had been expected for more than a year, Mr. Rau had repeatedly put off making an announcement pending presidential elections in May 1999 when he had hoped to stand as the SPD candidate.

But Mr. Schröder's resounding victory in regional elections in Lower Saxony earlier this month,

which put him in the lead as SPD candidate, prompted Mr. Rau's announcement Monday.

Mr. Rau had faced Mr. Kohl in legislative elections in 1987 but lost.

His decision to resign was immediately met Tuesday with calls by Mr. Kohl's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) for early elections in North Rhine-Westphalia.

"Early elections would be the most proper solution so that each citizen can decide which government it wants in Düsseldorf," the CDU's Secretary General Peter Hintze was quoted as saying on public radio.

Hong Kong asks WHO to help fight cholera

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong Tuesday called on the World Health Organisation (WHO) to help tackle an outbreak of cholera.

The move on the cholera scare comes less than four months after Hong Kong sought help from the who to battle a deadly chicken flu that infected humans and killed six people.

Twenty-eight people have been confirmed with cholera since Saturday, including 25 announced Monday — all had returned from tours of Thailand earlier this month.

Director of Health Margaret Chan said Hong Kong had contacted Thailand but said the WHO might be best placed to press Bangkok on the need to combat the problem.

"We have written to the consul-general of Thailand in Hong Kong and asked them to provide us with information," Ms. Chan told a news conference.

"We have already informed the who of the cases of cholera found in Hong Kong, both local and imported, and it is through the who network we hope to be able to transfer information to the relevant authorities for them to take control measures."

Hong Kong also has 13 local cholera cases and two from China, giving a total of

43 cases of the highly contagious disease.

While no one has died so far, authorities have tried to combat the outbreak in this cramped territory of 6.6 million people by boarding planes from Thailand to check passengers and imposing new checks on all imported shellfish.

Are also distributing leaflets on what people should do if they feel unwell and asking the public to take more care in personal and food hygiene while travelling abroad.

The moves have drawn an icy reaction from Thai officials who have denied the presence of cholera in their country and accused Hong Kong of exaggerating and hurting the Thai tourism industry.

But, Tuesday, the tourism authority of Thailand said Thai health authorities were closely monitoring the situation.

"The tourism authority of Thailand is working closely with the relevant Thai authorities and will fully cooperate with the Hong Kong government health department and the travel industry council on any measures to protect the health of travellers to the kingdom," it said in a statement.

Hong Kong's number of cholera cases so far in 1998

dwarfs the four cases in the whole of 1996 and 14 in 1997, Ms. Chan said.

"We have holiday makers who returned from Thailand complaining of vomiting and diarrhoea and on laboratory testing, the organisms were found to be the cholera el tor (01 el tor, ogawa) type," Ms. Chan said.

"It's not the classical cholera, I must emphasise, and I think they (Thailand) are referring to classical cholera."

Cholera, an infectious disease of the intestines usually contracted by drinking contaminated water, is marked by overwhelming dehydration, severe diarrhoea and vomiting.

Ms. Chan said the el tor was a milder form of cholera, "but nonetheless, it is cholera."

Ms. Chan said she was not directing remarks against any country, and said the government would not require Thais visiting Hong Kong to produce any "vaccination certificates", nor would it stop Hong Kong people going to Thailand.

"The Hong Kong government does not advocate people not to travel to any country," she said.

Taiwan Tuesday warned travellers bound for Thailand to take precautions against cholera.



Indonesian students chant anti-government slogans during a demonstration at a university in southern Jakarta. Students are permitted to demonstrate within the campus gates only but the ban allowing protests on the streets of the capital is due to be lifted March 18 (Reuters photo)

Indonesian police clash with Surabaya students

SURABAYA, Indonesia (Reuters) — Three Indonesian students suffered serious head injuries in a clash with police Tuesday during an anti-government protest at a state-run teachers' college in Surabaya, witnesses said.

They said hundreds of students were attending a speakers' forum when some of the protesters attacked police, who had come about 30 metres inside the campus gates.

The witnesses said three students suffered serious head injuries and dozens of others minor injuries when the police from the local east Surabaya district fought back. Some students threw stones at the police, they added.

One witness said the police were ordered onto the campus by senior officers to disperse the open forum because students had been criticising President

Suharto during the heated discussion.

Police were not immediately available for a comment.

Witnesses said students later continued their discussions while police stood outside the campus. There were no immediate reports of arrests.

It was the third clash between students and security forces in Surabaya in the past week.

Meanwhile, open forums, each attended by more than 4,000 students, were held at the University of Pancasila and University of Mercu Buana in the capital Jakarta. A smaller gathering of around 1,000 students took place at the national Islamic institute.

Students across the country have held protests, most of them on campus, calling for political and economic reform as well as lower prices of basic commodities.

Kremlin doctors order Yeltsin to stay in bed

MOSCOW (AFP) — Kremlin doctors Tuesday ordered President Boris Yeltsin to remain partially confined to bed all week, forcing leaders of 12 former Soviet republics to cancel a Moscow summit, officials said.

Doctors advised 67-year-old Mr. Yeltsin to remain at his Gorky-9 residence outside Moscow to ensure he recuperates from an acute chest infection which has left him hoarse and with a heavy cough, the presidency said.

The president's medical advisors had met Tuesday and recommended (that Mr. Yeltsin) continue his treatment in his suburban residence and remain partially confined to bed, a Kremlin statement said.

Doctors "also recommended that the president refrain from attending all meetings this week in order to avoid bronchial complications," it added.

Mr. Yeltsin would continue a course of antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs, and had been prescribed hot drinks and cough medicine by doctors, the president's press service added.

The Kremlin chief abruptly cancelled all his engagements Friday after being laid low by the acute chest infection, his second such illness in four months.

Financial markets, which have in the past oscillated wildly on reports of Mr. Yeltsin falling ill, reacted with calm to the news that Mr. Yeltsin would be in semi-confinement all week.

Tom Brackenbury, an analyst with Rinako Plus brokerage, told AFP that "equities were slightly depressed" on the news "but on quite low vol-

umes." Bonds edged up "on a slight anxiety factor," he added.

The initial announcement of Mr. Yeltsin's latest illness Friday caused only a ripple on the markets, with analysts explaining that Mr. Yeltsin is no longer the sole guarantor of reform in Russia.

Mr. Yeltsin ordered Deputy Prime Minister Ivan Rybkin, in charge of relations with CIS states, and CIS Minister Anatoly Adnashin, to travel to CIS capitals to work out a date for the rescheduled CIS summit.

Officials said the third week in April had been provisionally earmarked.

The postponement marks the second time in two months the summit has been delayed. A Jan. 23 gathering was cancelled on Jan. 6 as Mr. Yeltsin was recuperating from a previous chest infection.

News of the latest illness came just days after Mr. Yeltsin insisted that doctors had given him a clean bill of health and that the saga of his health problems was now a "closed book."

Mr. Yeltsin's health has been under the spotlight since sides hushed up a heart attack he suffered on the eve of his reelection in July 1996, the third attack suffered by the Kremlin chief in 15 months.

Although Mr. Yeltsin was reinvigorated by quintuple heart bypass surgery the following November, he has been prone to infections, suffering double pneumonia in January 1997 and falling victim to a chest infection last December.

The 67-year-old president, who has lived almost 10 years more than the current average for a Russian male, has recently appeared to tire quickly.

Gaullist rejects pact with extreme right

PARIS (AFP) — Gaullist spokesman François Fillon Tuesday rejected an alliance offer by France's extreme right National Front leader Jean Marie Le Pen to stop the left taking control of several regions after Sunday's regional polls.

Mr. Fillon, spokesman for the Rally for the Republic (RPR), said: "We shall never accept the hand he is offering us. There are no two ways about it."

Speaking on French Radio, Mr. Fillon said the National Front was "in a hole" and vowed: "We shall not be the ones to help get it out."

Monday Mr. Le Pen offered his rightwing rivals a programme based on the lowest common denominators of his policies: rejecting any tax increase, priority for security and "protecting French cultural and regional identities".

Mr. Le Pen said the NF would forego its racist-

tinged insistence on "priority for nationals" under which French nationals would get preference in such areas as welfare and housing.

The anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic leader said the Front was "ready to help local councillors who genuinely want to keep the Socialist-Communist alliance out of power".

In many regions where the left has a narrow lead over the mainstream right, NF support could be crucial to stop such regions falling under the control of a leftist alliance composed of Socialists, Communists and Greens.

However, throughout the campaign for the regional polls, the leaders of the Gaullist RPR and the more centrist Union for French Democracy (UDF) vehemently rejected any alliance with Mr. Le Pen's party.

Former Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, defeated

in the greater Paris region, the Ile-de-France, and former Defence Minister François Léotard, who lost the contest in the Mediterranean region of Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur, have both said they will not seek regional assembly presidencies for fear of winning the posts with Front support.

The regional assemblies will vote Friday to elect their presidents, with the National Front in a position to play the role of arbiter in many regions.

Nationwide, the governing left coalition totalled 36.48 per cent of the votes compared with 35.06 per cent for the mainstream right and 15.27 for the NF, official results from Sunday's vote showed.

The results from the interior ministry did not include the Caribbean departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique, nor French Guiana.

Court deprives father of rights, setting Japanese legal history

TOKYO (AFP) — A Japanese court has set legal history by depriving a father of his parental rights for sexually abusing his daughter. Kyodo news agency reported Tuesday.

The family court found that the father and his friends had sexually abused the daughter for five years since she was about 12 years old, the lawyers were quoted as telling the agency.

The court approved the prosecution request for the father's parental rights to be removed in November 1996, but the case, filed in April that year when the daughter was still a minor, was only revealed by the legal team Tuesday.

"It is epoch-making as it is the first time in Japan that a prosecution request for depriving someone of parental rights has been approved," a lawyer for the daughter was quoted as saying.

The abuse came to light in October 1995, but only the father's friends received summary convictions for forcible indecency, while he escaped punishment, the lawyers said.

Shigehiro Takahashi, child welfare professor at Komazawa University in Tokyo, told the Tokyo Shimbun paper: "In Japan, parental rights have been accepted to the extent that if it is your child it doesn't matter if you boil or roast it and then eat it."

The woman, now aged 20, also received a total 7.5 million yen (\$60,000) in an out of court settlement with three men who admitted sexually abusing her, the lawyers said.

Such settlements between sexual abuse victims and their attackers are common in Japan.

According to a court petition, the father started to sexually abuse his daughter in 1989, forbade her to eat when she failed to obey his orders and forced her to work late into the night at a restaurant.

Without parental rights, the father cannot supervise either the property or activities of a child.

Primakov in Belgrade for talks on Kosovo

BELGRADE (AFP) — Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov arrived Tuesday in Belgrade for talks with top Yugoslav officials over the crisis in the troubled south Serbian province of Kosovo.

Mr. Primakov will meet Tuesday with Yugoslav Foreign Minister Zvezdan Jovanovic and the Serbian and Montenegrin presidents Milan Milutinovic and Milo Djukanovic.

Mr. Primakov will hold talks with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic Wednesday before heading for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia.

This month's eruption of the crisis in Kosovo, where 90 per cent of inhabitants are Muslim ethnic Albanians, is expected to dominate Mr. Primakov's discussions in Belgrade, although his visit to the Balkans had long been planned.

About 80 ethnic Albanians were killed when Serbian

security forces cracked down on suspected separatists in Kosovo, triggering an international outcry and calls for sanctions against Belgrade.

Mr. Primakov has discussed his trip with his counterparts from the six-nation "contact group" on Yugoslavia, including U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, France's Hubert Vedrine and Italy's Lamberto Dini, the Russian news agency Interfax reported.

Russia has urged Belgrade to hold talks with Albanian community leaders while rejecting their calls for independence, insisting on respect for the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, which is comprised of Serbia and Montenegro.

Moscow, a traditional ally of the Christian Orthodox Serbian people, has opposed the dispatch of an international peace force to Kosovo province, which is regarded by Serbian nationalists as the birthplace of the Serbian state.

Fears spur last-minute change in docking

MOSCOW (R) — The commander of Russia's Mir space station overrode automatic systems and guided in an unmanned cargo craft manually Tuesday after the vessel veered slightly off course, space officials said.

Mission control has been especially careful about dockings with Progress cargo ships since a collision last June between a cargo tug and the 12-year-old station, the worst accident during its long stay in space.

Cosmonauts are still repairing damage inflicted during that incident and one module remains sealed off from the rest of the orbiting station.

Space officials said Tuesday the Progress craft, bringing cargo, including a vital set of wrenches needed to open a hatch, eventually docked smoothly with Mir.

"The cargo craft approached Mir up to 22 metres away on automatic pilot, and then a decision was made to go to manual," Deputy Flight Director Yuri Antoshechkin told Reuters.

The change in the cargo ship's course was within allowable norms and its navigation system continued to work. But mission control's flight director made the decision as a precaution, said Mr. Antoshechkin.

Flight Director Vladimir Solovoyov said the Progress M-38 cargo tug had inexplicably started deviating from its course as it approached Mir in automatic mode.

"At first we hoped the automatic equipment would correct the course, but when the two craft were 15-20 metres from each other it became clear we should switch to the manual

mode," he said. Commander Talgat Musabayev completed the docking at 0031 GMT.

"There were deviations in the angle, but they were not more than allowed," said Mr. Antoshechkin, who heads mission control's technical analysis division. "We have continued automatic dockings in other such instances."

Musabayev and engineer Nikolai Budarin, in orbit with NASA astronaut Andrew Thomas, received a new pack of wrenches to replace the set they broke trying to open a hatch to go on a space walk on March 3.

They later found the station's best wrench which had been misplaced prior to the spacewalk and found that it opened the hatch without a problem.

Now that the new backup wrenches have also arrived, the cosmonauts can go ahead with their next space walk, planned for April 1, one of four or five lined up for next month to conduct a series of repairs.

Experts on earth have sent up a small jet engine which Musabayev and Budarin will fix to the end of a boom during a space walk.

The small device will help orientate the station and replace one that is virtually out of fuel.

The Progress tug is also packed with other supplies, including water, fuel, technical equipment, clothing, food and letters for the crew aboard the ageing Mir.

The hatch cosmonauts use for spacewalks continues to leak slightly, but mission control officials say there are no immediate plans to make further repair attempts as it poses no significant danger.

INS denies visa extension to dead girl's family

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. immigration officials denied Monday a requested visa extension by the family of a Brazilian teenager killed in Washington by a drunk-driving diplomat from Georgia in January 1997.

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) denied a request by the family of 16-year-old Joviane Waltrick to stay in the United States for at least six months to handle \$15 million in civil lawsuits filed in the girl's death, the family's lawyer Mark Zaid said in a statement.

The family is seeking the money from six defendants including driver Gueorgui Makharadze, the Republic of Georgia, the Ford Motor Company and the Greek restaurant where Mr. Makharadze had been dining.

The family has until Wednesday to voluntarily leave the country, or be in violation of U.S. visa laws, Mr. Zaid said, although he said INS officials were willing to extend the family's stay for an additional 120 days.

He said the family planned to file a petition requesting the extension shortly.

In addition, INS officials would cooperate and "permit return to this country in parole status"

to allow the Waltrick family to handle the civil lawsuits and "other compelling needs." INS District Director Benedict Ferro wrote the family.

"We are encouraged by the INS' willingness to cooperate with our efforts to ensure justice is served in connection with Joviane Waltrick's death in Washington," said George Doumar, another attorney representing the family.

Georgia in December waived diplomatic immunity for Mr. Makharadze after a Washington court sentenced him to between seven and 21 years in jail for involuntary manslaughter.

Briton moves gate to let children ride to school

LONDON (R) — Youngsters Huw and Hywel Morris will be able to use the school bus again — thanks to some hard work in the garden by their father.

Huw, 8, and Hywel, 5, lost their daily ride after Caerphilly council in south Wales ruled that only children living more than 2.5 km from school should be entitled to free transport.

The distance to their primary school, measured

from their garden gate, falls just centimetres short.

So, the daily Express newspaper reported Tuesday, their dad dean plans to lay a new garden path and move the gate to the other side of the garden so that it will be 2.5 km plus one metre from the school.

"It's ridiculous. It's bureaucracy gone mad, but I'm left with little choice," the 37-year-old electrician told the paper.

Snowboarder dies in snow

BREGENZ, Austria (AFP) — A 21-year-old German snowboarder died after flying head first into a snowdrift where he became entombed, police said Tuesday.

The snowboarder missed the edge of the piste Monday in poor visibility in the resort of Ifen 2000 in western Austria, and was unable to extricate himself after landing in the deep snow, they said.

Industrialists protest amendments to AFM fees

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI) sent a memorandum Tuesday to Jordan Securities Commission (JSC) Chairman Michel Maro protesting amendments to the stock exchange regulations which raised the listing fees on public shareholding companies from JD2 for every 10,000 dinars to JD1 for every one thousand dinars.

The memorandum also protested limiting the ceiling of fees for the registration of securities at the stock exchange, known as the Amman Financial Market (AFM).

In its memorandum, the ACI said that raising the fees by almost fivefold is bound to

increase the financial burden on the companies, especially those which are going through difficult financial situation.

The memorandum noted that according to the amendments, companies are allowed a fixed period of time to adjust to the new regulations but this condition is bound to create a confusion to these entities.

The major increase in listing fees and the absence of a ceiling for fees on securities can only have an adverse effect on the national companies and are bound to reduce the opportunities for marketing and competition, according to the memorandum.

It said the ACI supports moves to develop

and restructure the AFM provided that such development does not involve raising fees on companies.

The chamber's memorandum put forth the following proposals to be considered by the JSC to address this situation:

1. Fees should be imposed on listed companies on the basis of trading value rather than on the nominal value of the fixed shares.

2. Fees could be linked to the volume of profits.

3. Fees on listed securities can be appropriated to the initial volume of trading and can be increased gradually and reasonably

over the years.

4. Fees should be fixed in harmony with the volume of trading at the AFM in accordance with the capital of the entity.

The memorandum also requested that the JSC reconsider the recent amendments to the AFM's regulations with a view to reducing these fees to a minimum and fixing a ceiling for the fees on the registration of securities.

"The JD5,000 minimum level should be cancelled and the JSC should charge fees on registered and issued securities on the basis of paid up capital rather than on the authorized capital," the memorandum concluded.

Oil price collapse highlights need for OPEC to reform — industry

DUBAI (AFP) — A plunge in oil prices to a nine-year low highlights the need for the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to give up its rigid quota system, experts and industry officials said here Tuesday.

"The quota system is past," said Kevin Henning, senior vice-president of the U.S. company Marathon Ashland Petroleum LLC at the Middle East Petroleum and Gas Conference held in the United Arab Emirates.

He argued that OPEC's

system of semestrial production ceilings and quotas for each of its 11 members was not flexible enough to adapt to fluctuations.

"(OPEC) should be in a position to respond quickly to increasing and decreasing prices by raising or low-

ering output," he said.

But for the time being, Venezuela and Saudi Arabia would have to come to terms and reduce production in order to check the fall in the oil prices, which could otherwise hit the \$10 mark by the end of the year.

experts said.

"Once everybody feels the pain, they will react," predicted Mohamed Idris Mansor, senior vice-president of Malaysia's Petronas.

Michael Pratt of the U.S.-based Energy Security Analysis explained that the Saudis and Venezuelans are fighting for an increased share of the American market and are not willing to unilaterally reduce their oil to U.S. clients.

"It's who's going to blink first," he said.

Brent North Sea crude has fallen under 13 dollars the barrel, yielding more than 30 per cent since OPEC ministers agreed at the end of November to increase their output ceiling by 10 per cent to 27.5 million barrels per day (bpd).

Quota violations by OPEC members, notably Venezuela, low demand in Asia because of the economic meltdown and a mild winter in the northern hemisphere were the other factors behind the collapsing prices.

But the quota violations are more an indication of the economic constraints and orientations of the cartel's members than a deliberate act, said Edward Morse, president and publisher of the Energy Intelligence Group.

Caracas continues to look for foreign investors in its oil sector and believes that the quota policy, which sets a ceiling on output, could discourage them.

"Venezuela has taken a market approach, opening its upstream and downstream sectors to foreign companies whereas oil in Saudi Arabia is a state monopoly," said Morse.

The managing director of the state-owned Petroleos de Venezuela (PDV), Jorge Zemella, said the output reduction urged by the Saudis was theoretically possible, but difficult.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET												
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDANI												
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179												
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 17/03/1998												
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANSA.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JO	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
346.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	13.8	1.19	13	360	121580	339.00	337.00	2.00		
2.340	1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8.3	0.00	1	5000	8600	1.72	1.72	0.01		
3.540	1.330	BANK OF JORDAN	4.3	0.00	1	500	675	1.34	1.35	0.01		
2.680	1.650	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.1	6.07	21	13850	23822	1.72	1.72	0.00		
5.300	4.610	THE HOUSING BK.	29.2	1.99	10	13950	69222	4.95	4.98	0.07		
4.180	1.820	JOR. KUMAYT BANK	9.9	0.00	5	1482	2801	1.89	1.90	0.01		
920	620	JOR. GULF BANK	2.9	10.61	10	13400	8846	0.67	0.66	0.01		
4.020	1.960	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.0	4.87	10	3297	6516	1.96	1.97	0.01		
1.460	800	BEIT AL-HAL (BEITNA)	6	16.85	11	5650	5067	0.93	0.89	-0.01		
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 233.69 %CHG: -0.58 82 57489 247128												
2.400	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.6	12.56	4	1850	3683	2.04	1.99	-0.05		
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 121.50 %CHG: -0.24 4 1850 3683												
2.140	1.590	JOR. ELECTRIC POW.	9.8	4.95	9	4800	9696	2.01	2.02	0.01		
1.550	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	41.9	0.00	10	6750	7075	1.05	1.05	0.00		
1.120	850	REAL ESTATE INV.	13.9	6.00	1	150	250	1.05	1.00	-0.05		
950	370	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	19.5	0.00	3	1000	380	1.18	1.28	0.10		
9.350	6.700	ALRAI	9.5	6.46	3	200	1859	9.30	9.30	0.00		
4.600	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.8	1.83	9	4400	19313	4.41	4.37	-0.04		
1.090	900	SARAA EDUCATION	9	0.00	2	800	750	0.94	0.94	0.00		
1.830	1.570	UNIFIED CO.	7.0	6.96	14	5650	8938	1.57	1.58	0.01		
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 119.55 %CHG: -0.12 51 23750 486161												
4.450	2.690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.7	3.96	28	6123	17011	2.76	2.78	0.02		
11.160	9.280	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.1	8.50	24	2740	28651	10.42	10.46	0.04		
2.480	1.800	INDUSTRIAL COM. ACI	9	0.00	7	1600	1603	1.18	1.12	-0.06		
5.700	3.440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	24.1	3.90	132	35153	161457	5.12	5.13	0.01		
8.540	5.000	ARAB CEREAL. DIST.	23.5	3.90	3	1000	7700	7.60	7.70	0.10		
1.420	770	BAPTA INDUSTRIES	47.5	0.00	1	100	84	0.87	0.84	-0.03		
6.350	4.400	DAR ALDAMA DV. INV.	14.9	4.12	3	230	1391	6.00	6.07	0.07		
3.480	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	6.3	9.26	2	850	2295	2.78	2.70	-0.08		
600	400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.2	0.00	14	9000	4320	2.47	2.48	0.01		
1.110	680	ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD.	22.9	0.00	2	1800	1340	0.77	0.78	0.02		
1.110	660	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	2	750	488	0.66	0.65	-0.01		
630	510	NATIONAL INDUS.	9	0.00	2	750	425	0.55	0.57	0.02		
930	510	INTERVISTO PETRO. CHEN.	9	0.00	9	6700	2681	0.43	0.43	0.00		
2.250	1.380	UNIV. CHEN. INDUS.	13.1	6.90	8	1550	3248	1.46	1.45	-0.01		
3.000	920	NATL. CABLE WIRE. IFAPC	27.9	0.00	11	3500	4054	1.14	1.16	0.02		
790	530	JOR. SUI. CHEN.	9	0.00	8	3500	2135	1.60	1.61	0.01		
1.560	1.150	ARAB PHARM. CHEN.	17.0	5.26	33	16690	22332	1.33	1.33	0.00		
1.120	520	KAWTHAR INVEST.	51.2	0.00	2	450	234	0.52	0.52	0.00		
1.670	810	UNIV. MODN. INDUS.	10.2	0.00	20	89	95450	101073	1.02	1.07	0.05	
1.410	690	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	10.5	12.82	6	8500	6580	0.78	0.78	0.00		
1.080	810	JOR. SUI. CABLE CO.	18.7	0.00	24	18420	18696	1.01	1.02	0.01		
1.880	1.290	EL-SAY ADHI WEAR	47.5	0.00	6	1100	1490	1.26	1.35	0.09		
1.250	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.5	0.00	6	3071	3623	1.19	1.18	-0.01		
1.220	860	UNION CH. VEG.	46.4	0.00	19	15650	16105	1.03	1.02	-0.01		
890	570	JORDAN STEEL	35.7	6.33	23	28700	22771	0.93	0.94	0.01		
840	570	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.9	15.63	18	28550	18212	0.63	0.64	0.01		
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 110.97 %CHG: -0.15 482 292507 470138												
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 167.57 %CHG: -0.30 619 375596 769110												
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 17/03/1998												
#	1,050	910	EXPORT & FIN. BKR. 752	17.4	0.00	5	7500	5360	93	0.01		
530	340	JOR. TRADE FNC.	10.4	0.00	23	113450	43956	39	39	0.00		
700	480	NATL. COMM. CENTERS	9	0.00	3	800	544	70	68	0.02		
800	480	UNION INV. 501	9	0.00	5	26500	6355	73	74	0.01		
160	620	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	4	2050	862	43	43	0.00		
780	610	AL-DAMLIYAH 752	68.1	0.00	1	100	128	69	71	0.02		
1,000	850	ARAB JOR. INVEST. CO.	17.0	0.00	1	10000	10000	1.02	1.00	0.00		
930	140	JOR. INDUS. SERVICE-JENCO	9	0.00	2	500	65	14	13	0.01		
640	370	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	8	12500	5800	48	48	0.00		
470	240	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	39.2	0.00	43	157650	51957	1.33	1.34	0.01		
750	360	NATL. MULT. EMP. PANCO	9	0.00	13	12719	4837	38	39	0.01		
GRAND TOTAL 222 512239 226977												

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) An old friend, possibly your spouse, is leaning on your delicate buttons. Without even seeming to try, he or she will poke just about every sensitive point you've got. The object of this lesson is to lighten up. If you do, those buttons just won't function anymore. Remember that while you're getting all worked up.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) This is a busy and complicated weekend. There's a lot to be done, and you may not know where to begin. You want to do things that will benefit the group, and yet the group doesn't seem to be clear in its direction. Make the decisions that they're all avoiding, so everyone becomes more productive.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You and your sweetheart are coming up with ideas, some pertaining to your career. You might want to take notes. Also, heed an older person's advice. The combination of a willingness to learn and move boldly is powerful. You might achieve something today you've previously only hypothesized. Go ahead and go for it.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) There are decisions to be made. Be patient and review the options. If you were to act on every impulse, you'd be racing in circles. Run the scenarios in your mind. Take each option and pretend you chose it. Imagine what will happen in two or three days, or years. If you keep playing this game, the best choice will become obvious.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Just when you think you have a partner figured out, he or she does something completely unexpected. There's a little financial strain, which is also unusual. Simple pleasures are best, and this weekend you'll find plenty of them. A gathering with close friends is the most obvious choice. And it's probably your best entertainment option.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You and your partner need to put all your cards on the table. Put your money there, too, so you can figure out how much you have. It's a good time to shop for real estate. There's one heck of a fine fixer-upper out there. If you're willing to put in a little extra work, you could save an awful lot of money.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) An idea is forming in your head, and the people closest to you know what it is. They've been contributing to its design. You often do your best work with another person's input. Otherwise, you'll try one option after another, until you realize you've gone in circles and nothing's been accomplished.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) This is a great day to listen at keyholes. Be careful not to get caught taking notes. You're not interested in blackmailing others to get what you want, but it never hurts to have a little something in reserve. For you, secrets are a bargaining chip. Just gather them all up and keep them in a safe place.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) An older person, perhaps a parent, has an agenda for you to follow. It's almost as if he or she is saying you have to do your chores before you can go play. You really do want to go play. There's some social event happening. You're just going to have to crack down and get the work out of the way as quickly as possible.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) An older person has your life pretty much figured out. You might as well go along with some gentle nagging. This person has your best interests at heart. There's a conflict between travelling and staying home, however. If you're going to travel, get started first thing this morning.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Today is good for hoping, dreaming and fantasizing. It's also a good time to travel, especially on a romantic excursion. In fact, you don't even need another person to start with. You'll attract one en route. Go somewhere you enjoy being. If you like hiking, for instance, go with a group. One could turn out to be a keeper.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) The focus is on jointly held finances, investments, and even taxes. This would be a good weekend to start those sort of projects. You generally don't have the patience. You'd rather be doing something else with your day. Perhaps you can get a Libra to help you with a stack of paperwork. It's worth a try.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

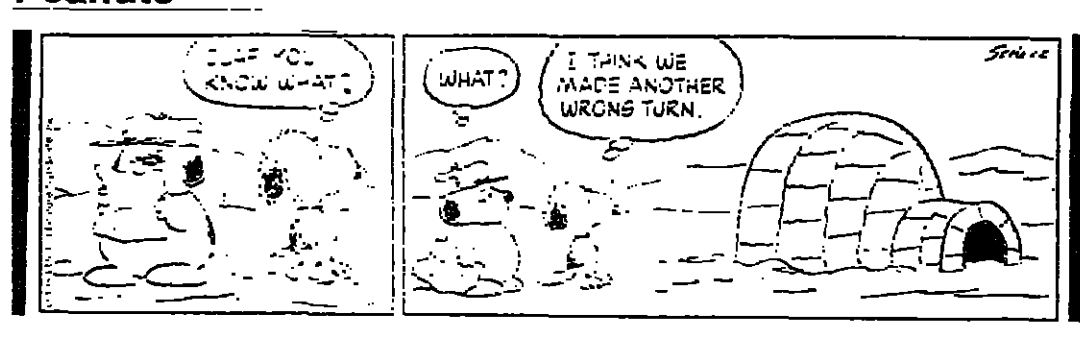
1 Across
1 Corrosive substances
6 Whippers
11 Wet dirt
14 Round tuber
15 Seaside
16 Had lunch
17 Gilbert & Sullivan opus
19 Slangy affirmative
20 Waste allowance
21 Ring wren, briefly
22 Sis's sis
23 Sis's son
26 Grieve audibly
28 Diligent insect
29 Legendary Greek author
33 Armed conflict
34 Persian Gulf nation
36 Gandhi's garb
37 Temporary money
40 Yogo's capital
41 Woods on the golf course
43 Jekyll's alter ego
44 Icy rain
46 Overdue
47 Nabisco cookie
48 In-Bain and McMahon
49 Ginger cookies
51 Supporter
52 Eases
55 Overbearing sitcom?
57 Infamous Amin
58 Real profit
60 Sheet of glass
61 Anars, the dartist
62 Simple
67 Beer barrel
68 Patterns
69 Exhausted
70 Dash letters
71 Small land mass
72 Chips in chips

1 Down
1 Gray shade
2 River of Cambridge
3 They're

4 Profundity
5 Headswimmer
6 H.S. Jr.'s exam
7 TV reception letters
8 See here!
9 Flynn of films
10 Vacillates
11 Address of a long-running sitcom?
12 Vehicular 180
13 Train station
18 Most recent
23 Manicure's dartist
24 Sign on: var.
25 School gatherings
27 Tough in Tunisia
30 Windmill blades
31 Church instrument
32 Piffling artwork?
35 Requires
38 Just right
39 Snow flower
42 Slow motion shot

45 Tidal wave
50 Musical composition
52 Seaside golf course
53 McClurg and Brackley
54 Payment for burritos
56 Pine product
59 Spill the beans
60 Attention-getting sound
63 Summer quail
64 Well-honed skill
65 Live resident
66 Recordings, in brief

Peanuts



Out of form champions look for Euro booster

PARIS (AFP) — Six European Cup quarter-finalists will be looking to Wednesday's second legs as a way of forgetting miserable results in their domestic matches last weekend — only two of them managed to win.

Both Manchester United and Monaco, who meet at Old Trafford after a four 0-0 draw in the first leg, both lost, leaving United with a return of just 14 points from 11 matches and the French champions virtually out of their title race as they trail leaders Metz by seven points with five games to go.

Both sides have serious injury worries with United, whose loss to main Premiership rivals Arsenal saw their lead reduced to six points with the Londoners having three games in hand, certain to be without talismanic Danish keeper Peter Schmeichel, who tore a hamstring in Saturday's defeat.

Also doubtful are defenders Phil Neville and Norwegian Ronny Johnsen, who both took knocks during the Arsenal defeat — Johnsen had only just returned to the side after recovering from concussion.

So desperate are United, who were already missing a third defender Gary Pallister and Republic of Ireland hardman Roy Keane, that Welsh wing Ryan Giggs will probably line-up even though he hasn't fully recovered from the hamstring injury that ruled him out of the first leg.

Manager Alex Ferguson will also call upon the injured England duo of Nicky Butt and Paul

Scholes to play in a competition that the Scotsman is desperate to win to set a seal on a highly successful reign.

Monaco, semi-finalists in 1994, will be missing French Under-21 midfielder Sylvain Legwinski with a knee ligament injury, and there are doubts over the fitness of African footballer of the year Victor Ikpeba, who has still not fully recovered from the ankle injury he picked up in the first leg.

The Nigerian star will travel but is regarded as '99 per cent certain' to miss the match by coach Jean Tigana.

Although both Martin Djetou and his Scottish midfield partner John Collins are carrying injuries, they are both likely to take their places alongside Algerian playmaker Ali Benarbia, while Thierry Henry will partner rising star David Trezeguet in attack.

Despite all the problems Collins remains confident of a Monaco triumph.

"Certain of our group have injury worries and tiredness is beginning to set in but we have proved several times this season in the European Cup that we react best when the chips are down," Collins said.

Juventus, the 1996 winners and last year's runners-up have a tough task ahead of them as they travel to surprise packets Dynamo Kiev, who forced a 1-1 draw in Turin two weeks ago, and their 2-2 draw with bottom side Napoli on Saturday will hardly have boosted their confidence.

However, their effervescent striker Alessandro del Piero, who is Italy's top scorer with 23 goals, dis-

missed any notion that after four successive draws the Italian giants were on the slide.

"Obviously, anything can happen. But I don't want to even consider the thought that we might go out in Kiev," Del Piero said.

"We've got to give everything. But the important thing is that everyone should walk off thinking they've done their best."

Dynamo Kiev, who won a Ukrainian Cup tie last Wednesday 3-0, will be at full strength with their stunning strike duo of Andrei Shevchenko and Sergei Rebrov straining to get at the Italian defence.

The Italians may well face another problem in that frost and snow has been affecting the pitch and those conditions will surely help their hosts.

The clash of fading German giants Bayern Munich and current European Cup holders Borussia Dortmund gives at least one of them the chance of wiping away memories of a mediocre league campaign.

Bayern, who won three successive European Cups from 1974-76, have seen their title chances ebb away and the 0-0 draw with VfL Bochum on Saturday virtually ruled out their chances of catching Kaiserslautern.

And although Dortmund beat bottom placed Arminia Bielefeld they remain well short of obtaining a UEFA Cup places.

"This is our match of the season. We have to retain this title if we are to be on the international scene next season," Dortmund's experienced playmaker Andy Moller said.

Dortmund will have a full strength squad to pick from apart from long term injury victims Matthias Sammer and Ibrahim Tanko, Bayern have several worries on the other hand.

Definitely out for Bayern is 'Super' Mario Basler with an ankle injury, while captain Thomas Helmer has a muscle strain and strikers Ruggiero Rizzitelli and Carsten Jancker have back and thigh injuries.

Real Madrid's hopes of stepping closer to winning their first European Cup since they clinched their sixth back in 1966 took a knock when they could only draw with Racing Santander as Barcelona moved seven points clear in the Spanish title race at the weekend.

The Spanish champions' morale deteriorated further as the club admitted that choosing German coach Jupp Heynckes as the successor to Italian Fabio Capello had been an 'error' and that even if they won the Cup he would be out of a job anyway.

However, Bayer Leverkusen coach Christophe Daum offered him support and said he was under no illusions about his men's task as Real have a valuable away goal following a 1-1 draw a fortnight ago.

"Bayer is a Fiat Uno and Real are a Ferrari. Jupp (Heynckes) knows all about German teams and he will not allow his side to relax for one minute," Daum said. "We have a lot of young players and I don't know how they will react," he added.

Armstrong out of Milan-San Remo race

PARIS (AFP) — America's 1993 World champion Lance Armstrong is out of Saturday's Milan-San Remo World Cup race, his U.S. Postal team announced on Tuesday.

Armstrong, back on the professional circuit this season after chemotherapy treatment for testicular cancer, returned to the fray last month at Ruta del Sol in Spain.

But flu forced him out of last week's Paris-Nice during the second stage and he returned to the United States. The team did not reveal when the 26-year-old would next return to the saddle.

Tour de France winner Jan Ullrich of Germany is also out of the Milan-San Remo event as he recovers from a viral infection.

"I've got over the viral infection but my legs are still too weak," Ullrich said.

"Telekom teammate Erik Zabel needs the strongest team possible around him and in my current form I'm not the man for the job," he explained.



World No. 1 Martina Hingis

Hingis extends lead after Evert Cup title

MIAMI (AFP) — Swiss World No. 1 Martina Hingis stretched her WTA rankings lead over second-rated Lindsay Davenport Monday after beating her American rival to win the Evert Cup.

Hingis led by 1,534 points entering the Indian Wells event and departed with the crown and a 2,031-point edge headed into the next event, which opens Thursday at Key Biscayne, Florida.

France's Mary Pierce, Venus Williams and Japan's Ai Sugiyama each advanced one spot in the rankings released here.

1. Martina Hingis (Swi)	6115 pts
2. Lindsay Davenport (USA)	4681
3. Jana Novotna (Cze)	3879
4. Monica Seles (USA)	3688
5. Amanda Coetzer (Rsa)	2853
6. Mary Pierce (Fra)	2690
7. Iva Majoli (Cro)	2662
8. Arantxa Sanchez (Spa)	2566
9. Conchita Martinez (Spa)	2495
10. Irina Spirelea (Rom)	2046
11. Venus Williams (USA)	1973
12. Nathalie Tauziat (Fra)	1946
13. Sandrine Testud (Fra)	1868
14. Anke Huber (Ger)	1841
15. Dominique Van Roost (Bel)	1766
16. Ai Sugiyama (Jpn)	1504
17. Patty Schnyder (Swi)	1459
18. Mary Joe Fernandez (USA)	1423
19. Lisa Raymond (USA)	1394
20. Sabine Appelmans (Bel)	1366



Ai Sugiyama

NEW INTERNET SITE

Jordan Distribution Agency is pleased to announce the installation of an Internet site which can help provide information on books and all publications.

The New site is: www.jda.jo.com
E-mail is: jda@go.com.jo



5 CONTINENTS TRAVEL SERVICES

**** WE HAVE MOVED ****

TO
1 IBN SINA STREET
WADI SAQRA SQUARE
Yassmin Center
Across From
KING ABDALLAH GARDENS

UNBEATABLE PRICES OF
AIR TICKETS TO

NORTH AMERICA EUROPE

THE WORLD

CONTACT TEL. 562-2526
YOUR TRAVEL AGENT

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Rozental facing 3rd knee operation

GLASGOW (AFP) — Glasgow Rangers manager Walter Smith on Monday confirmed Chilean striker Seb Rozental is set to undergo a third knee operation. The latest injury is with the same knee, but is disconnected to the previous ligament damage which has sidelined him for almost a year. The damage is understood to be such that the player is unlikely to be able to play for Chile at this summer's World Cup in France. The 4 million pound (\$6.5 million) signing from Universidad Catolica is expected to return home for the surgery. Smith told the Glasgow Evening Times: "He is feeling discomfort and this latest problem will have to be addressed sooner rather than later. We have not set a date yet, but once he does go in he will not be able to play football until next season — it is a major disappointment to us."

Bilbao into top six

BILBAO (AFP) — Athletic Bilbao boosted their campaign for a UEFA Cup spot in Spain when they beat Mallorca 3-1 Monday night to go sixth in the table. After Larrazabal the first on the half hour from a free-kick and further efforts from Carlos Garcia and a last-minute penalty from Gabriel Omar Amato had hit a 77th minute consolation, also from the spot.

McCreesh caught doping

ROME (AFP) — England's Geoff McCreesh has been provisionally suspended by the European Boxing Union for doping. The Gazzetta dello sport reported on Tuesday, McCreesh tested positive after losing on a technical knockout against Italy's Michele Piccirillo on November 29 last year at Novara in Piedmont, northern Italy.

Injury stops Leeds' Kewell

SYDNEY (AFP) — Exciting Leeds United youngster Harry Kewell Tuesday withdrew from Australia's under-23 football series with Brazil citing a groin injury. Australia's Olympic team coach Raul Blanco said he had been informed by the Leeds United doctor that 19-year-old Kewell suffered a groin injury in last Sunday's 5-0 English Premier League rout of Derby County and would be unable to train for at least two weeks. Leeds, chasing a UEFA Cup place next season, had been reluctant to release the in-form Kewell to play for the Australian Olyroos with manager George Graham stressing it was only a friendly series. The series against Brazil, as preparation for the 2000 Sydney Olympics, begins here on Saturday. Moves to Adelaide three days later and ends in Perth on March 28. Kewell was one of the outstanding players in Australia's failed bid under Terry Venables to reach this year's World Cup finals in France.

Mother's Day

Join us in celebrating Mother's Day at **PHILADELPHIA CORNER** on the 21st of March. 50% off for all children & a special gift for mother. For RESERVATIONS call Tel: 5651009 Shmeisani up the road from the Power Flut.

JORDAN TIMES FAX
5696183

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA 1' Mike Myers & Elizabeth Hurley ... in AUSTIN POWERS: International Man of Mystery Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PHILADELPHIA 2' Val Kilmer & Elizabeth Shue ... in THE SAINT Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PLAZA The biggest cinema production TITANIC Shows: 12:00, 3:00, 7:00, 10:30 p.m.	CONCORD Adel Imam & Yusra ... in RISALA ILA AL WALI (ARABIC) Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30 TITANIC SHOWS: 9:30 P.M. LONG KISS GOODNIGHT Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN GRAND OPENING TITANIC Shows: 5:15, 8:30 The film is also on at 2:00 p.m. & 12:00 a.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays	GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN GRAND OPENING TITANIC Shows: 3:30, 7:00, 10:30 The film is also on at 12:00 a.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 NOW ON DAILY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE Starring Hisham Yanes and his group For reservations call: 4640155, 4625155
----------	---	---	---	--	---	--	---

Entertainment
Voraussetzung
und Schrift
Bitte kontak
Tel. N
F
Unterricht
Three bed
Nice loca
Call Tel.:

Marine Sports Federation prepares to host Aqaba Championship

By Roufan Nabhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Royal Jordanian Marine Sports Federation (RJMSF) has set an ambitious plan to widen participation in marine sports to include athletes from all over the Kingdom. RJMSF Vice President Simon Khouri said.

"We are trying to open the doors of participation to a wider scope of marine sports enthusiasts from different cities in Jordan and not only from Aqaba," Khouri Tuesday told the Jordan Times.

He added that the RJMSF is now preparing for the 1st Arab Fins Championship in Aqaba April 26-29, the International Fins Championship in Italy May 2-5 and the Speed Boats Continental Championship in Dubai in mid-May.

The federation, headed



HRH Princess Rania

since March 1998 by Her Royal Highness Princess Rania, was established in 1962 and has since then held several international championships in Aqaba. "We started with an international event on the occasion of His Majesty

King Hussein's birthday. Since then we contacted the International Diving Federation to become members in the sports of diving, boating, water skiing and sailing," he continued.

RJMSF Director Omar Kilani explained that the peace process has enabled the federation to overcome the technical barriers of organising international events in Aqaba.

"We now have an extra 2km in sea width. That is why it has become easier to organise international events with more space," he added.

The interest of Princess Rania and the challenge of competing on an international level has given the RJMSF team a great incentive.

The team's best achievements came in Egypt in 1997.

"We took the gold medal in the Fins competition in which Germany, Hungary,

Austria, Egypt, and Israel competed," Kilani said.

Meanwhile, the team is training hard daily to improve their form to enable them to compete against other participating teams in the Aqaba Arab Championship.

"The team is practising daily in Aqaba and in Amman," Khouri said. "We have swimmers from Al Orthodox Club, Al Hussein Sports City and from Irbid."

"We are proud to host the best teams in the Arab World: Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon and United Arab Emirates."

On the other hand, plans are underway to establish an Arab Water Skiing Federation in Aqaba.

"The federation will include the UAE, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan," Khouri pointed out.

Asia set to oppose England, Germany for 2006 World Cup

HONG KONG (AFP) — Asia is on course to vote against England and Germany in the 2006 World Cup battle, according to regional soccer leaders.

And the Asian Football Confederation's growing insistence that the finals be rotated among the continents will be a massive boost to South Africa's hopes of hosting the football spectacular.

AFC general secretary Peter Velappan told the AFC executive committee:

"It should rightly be Africa's turn in 2006. Europe in any case has staged the World Cup a number of times and should be flexible on this matter."

But Velappan has not completely ruled out the bids by England and Germany, who are already furiously lobbying for support among Asia's 40-plus votes.

Velappan told AFP the continental federations had "agreed to the principle

of rotation" of the finals. The main dispute is over when it should start.

He said the Asian, African, South American, North American and Oceania federations wanted to start from this year's World Cup finals in France.

UEFA, which wants the finals back in Europe in 2006, is arguing that rotation should start with the 2002 finals in Japan and South Korea, which would be the first in Asia.

UEFA has said Africa should get the finals after Europe in 2006.

"After the World Cup in France, FIFA will convene a meeting to decide whether to accept the rotation principle proposed by the confederations or to keep it as an open bid as in the past," said Velappan.

"Asia is saying that since the decision has been made to rotate, the point of start for the rotation should be from the World Cup in France.

"Japan/South Korea will host the

2002 finals and then it should go to Africa in 2006," he said.

"The World Cup belongs to the whole world. FIFA has 198 members and those who have the capacity and ability to host should have the opportunity to host it."

But Velappan added: "It is not a pressing issue, with so many economic, political and social changes taking place so rapidly around the world."

England and Germany are locked in their own battle for the 2006 finals, which has been complicated by South Africa's entry into the race last month.

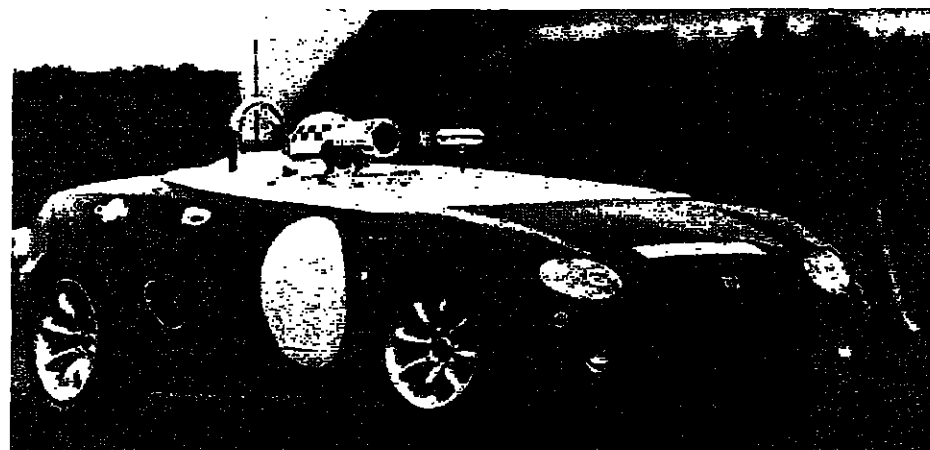
FIFA will make a decision in 2000, but Germany's bid leader Franz Beckenbauer has already warned that the split between the two European giants could hand the contest to South Africa.

Rover group's 'Spyder' car unveiled at Geneva show

MG CARS has unveiled a stunning new "Spyder" design study built around the highly successful MGF. The Super Sports follows in the footsteps of famous racing MGs from the past, capturing the true spirit of the MG marque in a thoroughly modern interpretation of a classic weekend race car.

Inspired by the historic exploits of MG in road races around the world, the MGF Super Sports made its first appearance at the Geneva Motor Show alongside a historic MG K3 Magnette — chassis number 001. The K3s competed successfully in the 1933 Mille Miglia, achieving a class win and the team prize: the first time a non-Italian team had done so.

With the Super Sports study, the MG design team has built on the great strengths of the MGF production model to create a single-minded vision of a modern weekend race car — a lightweight, but



exquisitely-finished sports car that is equally at home on road or track. In true MG tradition, the Super Sports is powered by a supercharged engine — a version of the K Series 1.8 litre unit producing 2000Ps — and utilises a race specification suspension tune developed from the 1998 MGF Cup UK race series.

Its muscular exterior styling accentuates the already purposeful stance of the standard MGF through the use of lightweight flared front and

rear side panels which accommodate a wider track, larger wheels and tyres — 210/605 R16 tyres at the front and 220/640 R17 at the rear. The deep red bodywork and full length white tonneau, with chrome embellishments, conjure up memories of typical racing MGs of the past. A chrome engine air intake, feeding the supercharger, rises in classic style above the mid-engine installation.

The driver's cockpit is set within a full-length ton-

neau moulded from carbon fibre composite and features a fast rake, low drag, Spyder-style racing screen. The seats, fully trimmed in white leather with red accent stitching, are purpose-built within an overall interior exploiting the white and chrome theme.

The MGF Super Sports was developed in just three months under the experimental project number "EX254" — the latest in a tradition extending back to the 1920s.

Owners set to vote on Murdoch-Dodger deal

ST. PETERSBURG (AFP) — Australian-born media mogul Rupert Murdoch's planned purchase of the Los Angeles Dodgers will likely be approved in Major League Baseball owners meetings that open Tuesday.

The deal, reportedly worth nearly \$350 million, would be one of the richest transactions in sports history and the highest price ever for a professional sports club.

One of baseball's most legendary franchises, and certainly the one with the greatest global appeal, the Dodgers announced a new management team last week in anticipation of approval here.

Murdoch's Fox Group was granted permission to sign a deal with Dodger owner Peter O'Malley last week by the ownership committee and acting commission Bud Selig rarely calls for a vote of the entire body without knowing he has the backing for approval.

"I'm still listening and I'm still reading and we have not come to any final decisions, but I do think Murdoch will be approved," Colorado owner Jerry McMorris said.

Baseball owners are unlikely to bite the hand that feeds them. Murdoch and Fox are in the third year of a four-year, \$565 million deal for baseball broadcast rights. Fox also owns hockey and American football rights.

The Dodgers' sale requires approval from three-fourths of National League owners, as the Dodgers are an NL club, and a majority of American League owners.

San Diego Padres owner John Moores is among those opposed to the sale, fearing that media magnate Murdoch would drive up baseball's salary scale.

Another NL owner is long-time Murdoch rival Ted Turner, owner of the Atlanta Braves.

Rival media giants Time-Warner and Disney have kept payrolls to a minimum in anticipation of Murdoch-mania, with salary costs rising more as a result of big spending by American League rival owners Peter Angelos of Baltimore and George Steinbrenner of the New York Yankees.

Another worry is how Murdoch's money might cause teams to make deals beneficial to the Dodgers, such as dealing a top pitcher to the Dodgers in return for a richer television package.

The same carrot-and-

stick approach could be used to prevent clubs from dealing players to rivals of Murdoch's Dodgers.

Murdoch's dealings in other sports, such as creating his own high-priced rugby league in Australia, also give owners pause.

While owners want such things as foreign rights for major league games to be split league-wide, Murdoch has the empire technology to send games of Japanese pitcher Hideo Nomo to his homeland for big money in a solo venture.

Wary owners also have seen Murdoch's HarperCollins publishing unit drop a book by former Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten because it was seen as possibly offensive to Chinese authorities Murdoch wants to cultivate to build a Chinese broadcast empire.

An impending sales deal involving the World Series champion Florida Marlins, plus troubles with teams in Toronto and Minnesota, will also be on the agenda.

Marlins president Don Smiley has organized a group to buy the Marlins from Wayne Huizenga for 150 million dollars. Most of the high-priced stars from the title team have been sold and fans are upset. The deal is expected to be completed by June.

Minnesota Twins owner Carl Pohlad last year signed a letter of intent to sell the team to North Carolina businessman Don Beaver. But no stadium is set to handle a major league team in Carolina.

Pohlad offered to stay in Minnesota but state officials vetoed funding a new stadium.

Belgian brewer Interbrew S.A. tried to sell the Toronto Blue Jays but pulled the club off the market when a deal with a real estate developer fell through. Interbrew got 90 percent of the team when it bought Canada's Labatt brewers in 1995.

Best — United not ready for European crown

LONDON (AFP) — Former Manchester United legend George Best believes the current side haven't yet got quite what it takes to be crowned kings of Europe, but insists the league title will end up at Old Trafford.

Northern Irish wing wizard Best, who scored in United's memorable 4-1 Wembley win over Benfica in the 1968 European Cup final for their only win in the competition, says his old club lack a ball-winner and sufficient attacking firepower to blow away the best the Continent has to offer.

United face Monaco at Old Trafford in the quarter-final second leg on Wednesday as Alex Ferguson's men seek to reach the semis for the second in succession with the tie poised at 0-0.

But Best, 51, thinks the Premiership champions will have to wait a little longer to land the Big One.

"It's not a question of if United win the European Cup but of when. But I don't think it will be this season," Best told Channel 4 television.

"Peter Schmeichel is not at the peak he enjoyed the last couple of years and I think United might be short in the ball-winning department," Best judged.

"We had Nobby Stiles and Paddy Crerand. But Roy Keane, who does that job for United now, is out and Nicky Butt's also been injured," Best explained.

"Up front, the team may just be a little short of the kind of firepower needed to win the big one. And overall, though United have some great players, they don't have a genius," he added.

United will be further

handicapped by 'keeper Schmeichel's absence through injury on Wednesday.

But Best thinks United will still come good in the league despite their recent poor run, which culminated in Saturday's home defeat by title rivals Arsenal.

"They've made it hard for themselves," but truthfully I'd still prefer to be in United's position than Arsenal's," said Best.

"If I was a betting man — which of course these days I'm not — I'd have my money on United for the title," he insisted.

Cheers Cafe
OPEN FOR
BREAKFAST
10 AM
FOOD FOR FUN
Innovative menu at
affordable prices
Tuning In - Sweifiya 863944

FOR RENT
(furnished or unfurnished)
A complete floor in a villa, with a separate entrance and garage. Consists of 3 bedrooms, dining halls and spacious salons.
Location: Um Utheina, behind San Rock Hotel, Wadi Al Jouz.
Please call Tel. 823011, 4655445

PASSPORT LOST
I, Nasser Mira Mohammad, have lost my Brazilian passport bearing the number C.J. 314657, in addition to other Brazilian documents. I would greatly appreciate anybody who finds them to call 09-3611486.

Paint Patrick's Day
Join in the fun for the celebration of St. Patrick's Day on Thursday, March 19th Starting 7.30 pm until 12.00. 65% off on all beer.
Make it a special day by Celebrating at Philadelphia Corner. Just around the corner from the Power Flut.
Tel: 5681009

Grand Opening
March 19, 1998

U.S. Discount Fashion

Kitabi Center
Al-Swaifiya
Salem Al-Qudah St.
ACROSS THE STREET FROM
PARADISE BAKERY

FEATURING
KIDS CORNER
FASHION FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Help wanted — Mobile: 54682

Eine deutschsprachige Mitarbeiterin für Vollzeitarbeit gesucht.
Voraussetzung sind sehr gute Deutschkenntnisse in Wort und Schrift sowie gute Schreibmaschinenkenntnisse.
Bitte kontaktieren Sie Herr Khalid Traich
Tel. NO. 079 - 37831

FOR RENT
Unfurnished Semi-Attached Villa
Three bedrooms. Area 340 sq.m.
Nice location: Behind C-Town.
Call Tel.: 4642229 - 079 / 70050

U.N. oil experts begin their evaluation of Iraqi facilities

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A U.N. team of oil experts in Iraq to examine the state of its oil production facilities has begun evaluations in the southern oil city of Basra, an Iraqi official said Tuesday.

"The U.N. team arrived in Basra for a three-day evaluation tour," the official told AFP.

The officials most recently made a three-day inspection tour of oil facilities in Kirkuk in the north of Iraq, where they met with Iraqi officials, the official said.

According to U.N. officials, the U.N. oil experts are to inspect the Basra oil fields and the Gulf terminal of Mina Al Bakr, Iraq's second most frequently used route for exporting crude oil.

Most Iraqi oil exported under the U.N. approved oil

for-food programme is sent out through the Iraqi-Turkish pipeline at Zakho, in northern Iraq.

The U.N. team, which comprises six experts from the Dutch firm Saybolt, arrived in Baghdad Thursday to evaluate Iraq's oil infrastructure and determine what it needs to increase oil exports. Two other experts based in Baghdad have joined the group.

The U.N. Security Council decided last month to raise to \$5.2 billion the amount of oil Iraq can export every six months to buy humanitarian goods.

The Security Council will decide whether to authorise Iraq to buy repair parts for its oil facilities depending on the oil team's report.

Mohammed Al Alousi, the head of the Iraqi parliament's oil,

energy, industry and mineral affairs committee, said Monday that Iraq needs authorisation for imports of parts totalling \$690 million if it is to upgrade its oil infrastructure to meet the new ceiling permitted by the Security Council.

The U.N. oil team's British leader Graham Brett said Friday that "so far we've been receiving excellent cooperation" from Iraqi officials.

His team's brief was to check if Iraq could manage "to export a further 20 per cent without a stopping list of new equipment," he said.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf has said that Baghdad currently does not have the technical capacity to produce more than \$4 billion of oil every six months because of its need for repair parts.

Qatari emir, Iraqi FM discuss weapons crisis, bilateral ties

DOHA (AFP) — The emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, held talks with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf on the sidelines of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting here Tuesday.

The official Qatari news agency QNA said Mr. Sahhaf gave the Qatari leader "greetings from [Iraqi] President Saddam Hussein and his appreciation for the positive contribution of Qatar in defusing

the crisis between Iraq and the United Nations" in February.

Mr. Sahhaf and the emir discussed "bilateral relations and developments on the Arab and Muslim scene," the agency said.

Qatar is one of the Arab Gulf states which is most open to Iraq, and maintains diplomatic relations with Baghdad.

Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassem Al Thani went to Baghdad in

February as part of international diplomatic efforts to defuse the Iraq-U.N. crisis over weapons inspections.

Mr. Sahhaf arrived here Monday to take part in the meeting of the OIC foreign ministers, who represent 1.2 billion Muslims.

The meeting was scheduled to end Thursday but will wind up Tuesday because the ministers have worked faster than expected, according to a Qatari foreign ministry spokesman.

Iranian official leads pilgrims to Saudi Arabia with warm words

TEHRAN (AFP) — The head of Iran's Mecca pilgrimage left here for Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, lavishly praising the "good state" of relations between the two Muslim states.

"Thank God, the political atmosphere between the two countries is ideal. Not since the victory of the (1979) Islamic revolution have relations been so friendly with Saudi Arabia," said Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahi.

He described as "messengers of unity and friendship" around 80,000 Iranians making the journey to the kingdom for the annual pilgrimage, or Hajj, later this month to Mecca and Medina, where Islam's holiest shrines are located.

Saudi-Iranian relations have improved considerably in recent months since moderate President Mohammad Khatami took office in August.

Former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who began the process of rapprochement, and Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi have visited Saudi Arabia in recent weeks.

In a sign of potential sectarian tension between the two countries, Iranian newspapers said Mr. Rafsanjani had left a prayer ceremony in Saudi Arabia during his visit last month to protest anti-Shiite comments made by a conservative Saudi Sunni Muslim leader, Sheikh Abdul Rahman Hazafi.

The sheikh's comments at a service at a respected mosque, Masjid Al Nabi, provoked an uproar among religious communities in Iran, and several revolutionary foundations and clerics sharply reprimanded him.

The anti-Shiite Sunnis known as the Wahabis have strong bases in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

But Mr. Reyshahi urged the mostly Shiite Muslim Iranian pilgrims to "fulfil their duties" and attend mass prayers led by Sunni Muslim leaders.

"Your participation in prayers at Masjid Al Nabi and Masjid Al Haram is a sign of Iran's goodwill in improving ties," he said, quoting by state television.

"The more our relations are strengthened, the more losses the enemies of Islam will suffer," the official added. "All that we have planned for the Hajj I hope leads to this divine goal."

Such rallies have in the past turned violent and in 1987 around 400 pilgrims, mainly Iranians, died in clashes with Saudi security forces.

In recent years, Iranian pilgrims have been forced to stage the protest in their tent camp to avoid clashes with Saudi police.

The Islamic republic wants to give a political dimension to Hajj and seize the occasion, when millions of Muslims converge in Saudi Arabia, to press for unity in the interest of the Muslim World.

But the Saudis want the event to have a strictly religious character, and each year they issue warnings against the distribution of pamphlets and other signs of political activities.

"If the Hajj is not used to give direction to the interests of Muslims, it is not a real one," Mr. Reyshahi said last week. "The event should be used to ensure Muslim's political and spiritual well-being."

Israel approaches France on sheltering SLA leaders

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel has approached France about accepting leaders of the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia in the event of an Israeli pullout from southern Lebanon, a newspaper reported Tuesday.

Yediot Aharnot said the question was discussed at a "secret meeting" late last week in Paris attended by SLA chief General Antoine Lahad and the Israeli defence ministry's coordinator for Lebanese affairs, Uri Lubrani.

Mr. Lubrani, in an interview with Israeli Radio on Tuesday, categorically denied the Yediot report. He told the radio that the report was "entirely invented."

Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai met with Gen. Lahad on Tuesday at the defence ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv and told journalists following the meeting that "the question was never discussed."

Gen. Lahad told reporters after meeting Mr. Mordechai that "if I had wanted to live in France I already could have done so long ago."

The SLA chief has a home in France and his wife and children live there. A number of other SLA chiefs have homes in Israel, according to SLA sources.

Mr. Lahad also said he was opposed to a suggestion by Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon last week that the Israeli army begin withdrawing from south Lebanon even if Lebanese forces do not first agree to take charge of the area.

Mr. Mordechai and Gen. Lubrani visited Paris 10 days ago and discussed the possibility of an Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

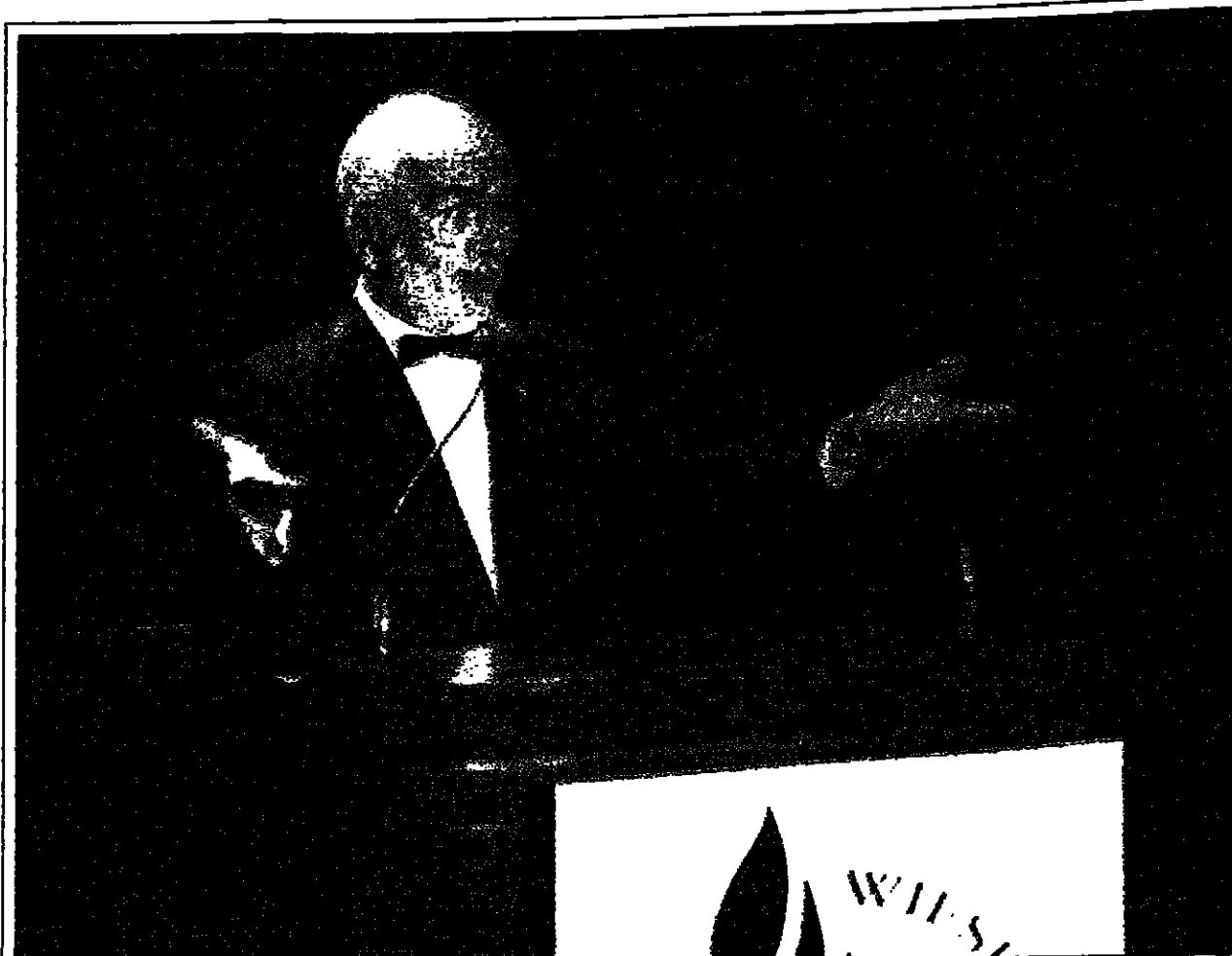
The 2,300 SLA militiamen in the self-declared "security zone" established by Israel in 1978 in south-

ern Lebanon are armed and trained by the Jewish state and could face reprisals in the event of an Israeli withdrawal.

Rising Israeli troop losses in the buffer zone — a record 39 soldiers killed in 1997 — have fuelled public calls in Israel for a quick withdrawal and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he is ready to pull out if Lebanon pledges to ensure security in the area.

"We are ready to leave Lebanon if the basic terms of U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 are applied, that is, if the Lebanese government guarantees peace and security," Israeli public radio quoted Mr. Netanyahu as saying Monday.

Lebanon and Syria, which has more than 30,000 troops in Lebanon, have demanded an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from the "security zone."



AWARD FOR KING'S EFFORTS FOR REGIONAL PEACE: King Hussein speaks after receiving the Wiesenthal Centre Humanitarian Award at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York on Monday. King Hussein was honoured for his efforts to bring peace to the Middle East (AP photo)

Former U.K. minister arrested over favours from Saudi weapon dealers

LONDON (AFP) — A former British government minister alleged to have accepted bribes from Saudi businessmen was arrested Tuesday by police investigating an alleged conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

Jonathan Aitken was questioned for two hours about his failed libel action last year against a newspaper and a television production company which made the corruption allegations, and released on police bail.

On Monday, his 17-year-old daughter, Victoria, was also arrested and questioned by officers, before being released on police bail.

A police spokeswoman said: "A 55-year-old man this morning voluntarily attended a

London police station with his solicitors by prior appointment and was arrested."

"The man is being interviewed in connection with allegations of perjury and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice."

Police on Monday also arrested Said Ayas, a principal aide to the Saudi royal family who is a business associate of Jonathan Aitken and godfather to Victoria, press reports said.

Conspiracy to pervert the course of justice carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment in Britain, and perjury — lying on oath in court — can lead to up to seven years in jail.

Aitken, 55, resigned as a junior economics minister in April 1995 and issued libel writs against The Guardian

newspaper and Granada Television for reporting that he accepted favours from Saudi arms dealers.

The allegations centred on a stay in 1993 at the Paris Ritz hotel where, the Guardian and Granada said, Aitken allowed Ayas to pay his bill, which would have been against rules for government ministers.

Other Guardian reports said that Aitken was financially dependent on Saudi businessmen, that he procured women for them, and was involved in secret arms deals.

In 1995, Aitken vowed to start a fight "to cut out the cancer of bent and twisted journalism" with the "simple sword of truth and the trusty shield of traditional British fair play."

But he was forced to drop his

action last June after The Guardian produced evidence undermining his claim that his wife Lolita had paid the Ritz bill. The paper's evidence indicated she was in Geneva at the time.

During the case, Lolita and Victoria both gave evidence in support of Aitken's libel action.

After the case collapsed, The Guardian handed its files to the police urging them to pursue its claims that Aitken and his family, including Victoria and his wife Lolita, had lied in their court evidence.

Lolita left her husband immediately after the libel case collapsed.

Aitken was recently reported to have accepted a job offer from defence giant GEC Marconi.

Rome rabbi says Pope to visit Israel before 2000

ROME (R) — Rome's chief rabbi said on Monday that Pope John Paul II had told him he would visit Jerusalem before the year 2000.

"The Pope told me and he promised me: before the year 2000 I will make a trip to Jerusalem," Rabbi Elio Toaff told reporters.

Rabbi Toaff did not say when the Pope told him about the trip but the rabbi meets the pontiff regularly.

The Pope has often said he wants to visit Holy Land sites as part of celebrations leading up to the start of the third millennium of Christianity.

The Pope has a standing invitation from the Israeli government and from Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to visit Holy Land sites in the Jewish state as well as those under Palestinian self-rule, such as Christ's birthplace of Bethlehem.

One die, 60 trapped in apartment block collapse in India

BOMBAY (AFP) — At least one person was killed and more than 60 were feared trapped Tuesday when a six-storey apartment block came down like a pack of cards in Bombay, the fire department there said.

A spokesman said the incident occurred at 5:00 p.m. in the city's northern district of Malad. City police spokesman Satyapal Singh said at least one person was killed and seven critically injured. "More than 60 residents are feared trapped," the official said.

"It looked like the most important step of the 20th century and this man is disarming it," he added. "I have very little optimism this man will do anything for peace."

Radical Hebron settler detained over violence

HEBRON (AFP) — Israeli police detained a leader of the militant Jewish settler enclave in Hebron Tuesday on suspicion of carrying out attacks on Palestinians in the divided city.

Baruch Marzel, a founder of the outlawed anti-Arab group Kach, was detained after he refused to sign a letter promising not to enter the 80 per cent of Hebron which was placed under Palestinian rule last year.

He was transferred from Hebron to Jerusalem where he was due to appear in court, a police spokesman said.

Police summoned Marzel and some 20 other Hebron settlers for questioning after a group of the militants entered a Palestinian-fridged sector of Hebron on Friday and threw stones at residents and homes.

The rampage sparked a counter-riot by Palestinians and forced Israeli troops guarding the Jewish enclave to intervene. Fourteen Palestinians were subsequently wounded by rubber-coated bullets fired by Israeli troops to break up the unrest.

Settlers said they launched the assault after shots were fired from a Palestinian zone into the Jewish settlement where some 400 settlers live under Israeli army guard, surrounded by 120,000 Arabs.

Most of the settlers called in for police questioning refused to respond.

Noam Federman, a spokesman for the Hebron settlers who was one of those summoned for questioning, told Israeli Radio he refused to go "because I have better

things to do." Palestinians protested angrily over the settler action, which also drew unusually harsh criticism from Israeli security officials.

Colonel Jibril Rajub, head of Palestinian security forces in the West Bank, warned Monday that any settlers who enter autonomous areas to attack Palestinians "will not get out alive."

The Hebron incident took place during five days of violent protests across the West Bank sparked by the slaying of three Palestinian workers by soldiers at an army checkpoint near Hebron.

One Hebron boy was killed and more than 100 Arabs wounded by rubber-coated bullets fired by troops during the stone-throwing protests.

PNA official sees no peace with Netanyahu

GAZA (R) — A senior Palestinian official said he doubted there would be peace in the Middle East as long as right-wing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was in power.

Planning minister and negotiator, Nabil Shaath, said late on Monday Palestinians were banking on Arab, European and American leaders to push Israel into fulfilling outstanding peace deals in the same way they had leaned on Iraq to end a recent standoff with the United Nations.

"Netanyahu is worse than any leader Israel has had in the past 50 years," Mr. Shaath told Egyptian reporters visiting the self-ruled Gaza Strip.

"The peace process put Israel in a position it never dreamed of having, it also gave us the promise of an independent state," he said.

"It looked like the most important step of the 20th century and this man is disarming it," he added. "I have very little optimism this man will do anything for peace."

Palestinians have called for a more active European role in reviving the stalled peace process to offset what they consider American bias towards Israel. Israel has long viewed European involvement as favouring the Palestinians.

Palestinian-Israeli peace talks faltered after Mr. Netanyahu was elected in May 1996 on a platform that rejected trading land for peace, the basis of a 1993 Oslo peace accord.

Peacekeeping plunged into crisis after Israel broke ground on a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem.

Violent protests have rocked the West Bank since Israeli soldiers shot dead three Palestinian workers at a military checkpoint near Hebron last week.

Palestinian officials said over 100 Palestinians have been hurt in the clashes. On Tuesday, a 15-year-old Palestinian boy died of wounds he sustained last week.

Shaath said Israel's decision to investigate the shooting and not to punish the soldiers involved was "galling."

"We don't want violent confrontations but I cannot guarantee what might happen," he cautioned, referring to Palestinian frustration with Israeli hardline policies and lack of progress in the peace process.

Mr. Shaath said a combination of U.N. pressure and lobbying by France and Russia had resolved the crisis with Baghdad over U.N. weapons inspections, and could balance the "unilateralism" of the United States towards its ally Israel.

"We expect the Europeans and the Russians to produce something concrete on the table. They played a very important role in the Iraqi crisis by implementing Security Council resolutions and finding a diplomatic solution," he said.

"On this rests the solution of the Palestinian crisis," Mr. Shaath said that in addition to European peace efforts, "Arabs must do their bit too."

Irish toast the shamrock as government goes global

DUBLIN (AFP) — About a million people attended St. Patrick's Day parades throughout Ireland Tuesday as the country closed down for the national holiday and government ministers scattered to celebrations worldwide leaving Foreign Affairs Minister David Andrews in charge at home. Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern led the government exodus to attend Washington celebrations with U.S. President Bill Clinton who claims Irish roots. Other ministers were toasting the shamrock in locations ranging from Paris to Moscow and from Cape Town to Sydney.

Novel view of Diana's life and times

LONDON (AFP) — The first novel about the life and death of Diana, Princess of Wales, is about to hit British bookshelves. "The Ways of Gentleness," written by a psychotherapist under the pseudonym Elizabeth Vickers, fictionalises her story by renaming the people involved. Prince Charles becomes Prince James, his son William becomes Edwin, the princess herself is Helena and Charles' long-term mistress Camilla Parker Bowles becomes Jessica Howes-Peters. Dodi Fayed is known as Milu. The publishers maintain the book is a serious and sensitive work in which the princess is introduced as the "extraordinary, the beautiful, the magnetic, the much-pursued Princess Helena."

'Titanic' breaks U.S. box office record

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — The blockbuster "Titanic" has broken the North American box office record previously held by "Star Wars." "Titanic" has generated some \$471 million in box-office receipts in the United States and Canada over the course of 13 weeks, according to figures by Exhibitor Relations. Since its release in 1977, "Star Wars" has taken in \$461 million in the same market. "Titanic" has already broken the \$1 billion mark worldwide.

China aims to embolden squeamish condom buyers

BEIJING (R) — For the embarrassed Chinese consumer who shirks at buying condoms under the withering stares of surly department store clerks — help is on its way. Chinese authorities, noting the plight of red-faced condom buyers, are planning to launch a series of chain stores specialising in contraceptives, the China Daily's Business Weekly reported. Most department stores now sell condoms, contraceptive pills and creams but traditional taboos against discussing sex in public mean many people are too bashful to brave the contraceptive counter. The state family planning commission would licence the speciality stores, ensuring they had properly trained staff, suitable facilities and government-approved goods.

Argentine shocks mom by turning up for own funeral

BUENOS AIRES (R) — A young Argentine man turned up for his own funeral last weekend after his mother mistakenly identified the body of a gunshot victim as her 21-year-old son. Robinson Gonzalez's family in the Atlantic port city of Bahia Blanca thought they recognised him on television when a local channel reported that a man was killed when a pistol he was handling accidentally went off. His mother wrongly identified the body in the local morgue as well. When Gonzalez phoned to tell her he was alive and the body was really 25-year-old Rodolfo Perez, she took it for a sick joke.